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A call to the unconverted

SELECT

CHRISTIAN AUTHORS,

WITH

INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS.

PUBLISHED BY CHA. MERS & COLLINS GLASGOW

A CALL

TO THE

UNCONVERTED;

NOW OR NEVER;

AND

FIFTY REASONS

WHY A SINNER OUGHT TO TURN TO GOD THIS DAY WITHOUT DELAY.

BY

RICHARD BAXTER.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

HAVING already introduced to the notice of our readers one of RICHARD BAXTER'S most valuable Treatises,* in the Essay to which we adverted to the character and writings of this venerable Author, we count it unnecessary at present to make any allusion to them, but shall confine our remarks to the subject of the three Treatises which compose the present volume, namely, "A CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED TO TURN AND LIVE;" "NOW OR NEVER;" and "FIFTY REASONS WHY A SINNER OUGHT TO TURN TO GOD THIS DAY WITHOUT DELAY."

These Treatises are characterized by all that solemn earnestness, and urgency of appeal, for which the writings of this much-admired Author are so peculiarly distinguished. He seems to look upon mankind solely with the eyes of the Spirit, and exclusively to recognize them in their spiritual relations, and in the great and essential elements of their immortal being. Their future destiny is the all-important concern which fills and engrosses his mind,

* The Saints' Everlasting Rest, with an Essay by Mr. Erskine.

and he regards nothing of any magnitude but what has a distinct bearing on their spiritual and eternal condition. His business, therefore, is always with the conscience, to which, in these Treatises, he makes the most forcible appeals, and which he plys with all those arguments which are fitted to awaken the sinner to a deep sense of the necessity and importance of immediate repentance. In his "Call to the Unconverted," he endeavours to move them by the most touching of all representations, the tenderness of a beseeching God waiting to be gracious, and not willing that any should perish; and while he employs every form of entreaty, which tenderness and compassion can suggest, to allure the sinner to "turn and live," he does not shrink from forcing on his convictions those considerations which are fitted to alarm his fears, the terrors of the Lord, and the wrath, not merely of an offended Lawgiver, but of a God of love, whose threatenings he disregards, whose grace he despises, and whose mercy he rejects. And aware of the deceitfulness of sin in hardening the heart, and in betraying the sinner into a neglect of his spiritual interests, he divests him of every refuge, and strips him of every plea for postponing his preparation for eternity. He forcibly exposes the delusion of convenient seasons, and the awful infatuation and hazard of delay; and knowing the magnitude of the stake at issue, he urges the sinner to immediate repentance, as if the fearful and almost absolute alternative were "Now or Never." And to secure the commencement of such an important work against all the dangers to which procrastination might expose it, he endeavours to arrest the

sinner in his career of guilt and unconcern, and resolutely to fix his determination on "turning to God this day without delay."

There are two very prevalent delusions on this subject, which we should like to expose; the one regards the *nature*, and the other the *season* of repentance; both of which are pregnant with mischief to the minds of men. With regard to the first, much mischief has arisen from mistakes respecting the meaning of the term *repentance*. The word repentance occurs with two different meanings in the New Testament; and it is to be regretted, that two different words could not have been devised to express these. This is chargeable upon the poverty of our language; for it is to be observed, that in the original Greek the distinction in the meanings is pointed out by a distinction in the words. The employment of one term to denote two different things has the effect of confounding and misleading the understanding; and it is much to be wished, that every ambiguity of this kind were cleared away from that most interesting point in the process of a human soul, at which it turns from sin unto righteousness, and from the power of Satan unto God.

When, in common language, a man says, 'I repent of such an action,' he is understood to say, 'I am sorry for having done it.' The feeling is familiar to all of us. How often does the man of dissipation prove this sense of the word repentance, when he awakes in the morning, and, oppressed by the languor of his exhausted faculties, looks back with remorse on the follies and profligacies of the

night that is past? How often does the man of unguarded conversation prove it, when he thinks of the friend whose feelings he has wounded by some hasty utterance which he cannot recall? How often is it proved by the man of business, when he reflects on the rash engagement which ties him down to a losing speculation? All these people would be perfectly understood when they say, 'We repent of these doings.' The word repentance so applied is about equivalent to the word regret. There are several passages in the New Testament where this is the undoubted sense of the word repentance. In Matt. xxvii. 3. the wretched Judas repented himself of his treachery; and surely, when we think of the awful denunciation uttered by our Saviour against the man who should betray him, that it were better for him if he had not been born, we will never confound the repentance which Judas experienced with that repentance which is unto salvation.

Now here lies the danger to practical Christianity. In the above-cited passage, to repent is just to regret, or to be sorry for; and this we conceive to be by far the most prevailing sense of the term in the English language. But there are other places where the same term is employed to denote that which is urged upon us as a duty—that which is preached for the remission of sins—that which is so indispensable to sinners, as to call forth the declaration from our Saviour, that unless we have it, we shall all likewise perish. Now, though repentance, in all these cases, is expressed by the same term in our translation as the repentance of mere

regret, it is expressed by a different term in the original record of our faith. This surely might lead us to suspect a difference of meaning, and should caution us against taking up with that, as sufficient for the business of our salvation, which is short of saving and scriptural repentance. There may be an alternation of wilful sin, and of deeply-felt sorrow, up to the very end of our history—there may be a presumptuous sin committed every day, and a sorrow regularly succeeding it. Sorrow may imbitter every act of sin—sorrow may darken every interval of sinful indulgence—and sorrow may give an unutterable anguish to the pains and the prospects of a deathbed. Couple all this with the circumstance that sorrow passes, in the common currency of our language, for repentance, and that repentance is made, by our Bible, to lie at the turning point from a state of condemnation to a state of acceptance with God; and it is difficult not to conceive that much danger may have arisen from this, leading to indistinct views of the nature of repentance, and to slender and superficial conceptions of the mighty change which is implied in it.

We are far from saying that the eye of Christians is not open to this danger—and that the vigilant care of Christian authors has not been employed in averting it. Where will we get a better definition of repentance unto life than in our Shorter Catechism? by which the sinner is represented not merely as grieving, but, along with his grief and hatred of sin, as turning from it unto God with full purpose of, and endeavour after new obedience. But the mischief is, that the word repent has a common

meaning, different from the theological; that wherever it is used, this common meaning is apt to intrude itself, and exert a kind of habitual imposition upon the understanding—that the influence of the single word carries it over the influence of the lengthened explanation—and thus it is that, for a steady progress in the obedience of the gospel, many persevere, to the end of their days, in a wretched course of sinning and of sorrowing, without fruit and without amendment.

To save the practically mischievous effect arising from the application of one term to two different things, one distinct and appropriate term has been suggested for the saving repentance of the New Testament. The term repentance itself has been restricted to the repentance of mere sorrow, and is made equivalent to regret; and for the other, able translators have adopted the word reformation. The one is expressive of sorrow for our past conduct; the other is expressive of our renouncing it. It denotes an actual turning from the habits of life that we are sorry for. Give us, say they, a change from bad deeds to good deeds, from bad habits to good habits, from a life of wickedness to a life of conformity to the requirements of heaven, and you give us reformation.

Now there is often nothing more unprofitable than a dispute about words: but if a word has got into common use, a common and generally understood meaning is attached to it; and if this meaning does not just come up to the thing which we want to express by it, the application of that word to that thing has the same misleading effects as in

the case already alluded to. Now, we have much the same kind of exception to allege against the term reformation, that we have alleged against the term repentance. The term repentance is inadequate—and why? because, in the common use of it, it is equivalent to regret, and regret is short of the saving change that is spoken of in the New Testament. On the very same principle, we count the term reformation to be inadequate. We think that, in common language, a man would receive the appellation of a reformed man upon the mere change of his outward habits, without any reference to the change of mind and of principle which gave rise to it. Let the drunkard give up his excesses—let the backbiter give up his evil speakings—let the extortioner give up his unfair charges—and we would apply to one and all of them, upon the mere change of their external doings, the character of reformed men. Now, it is evident that the drunkard may give up his drunkenness, because checked by a serious impression of the injury he has been doing to his health and his circumstances. The backbiter may give up his evil speaking, on being made to perceive that the hateful practice has brought upon him the contempt and alienation of his neighbours. The extortioner may give up his unfair charges, upon taking it into calculation that his business is likely to suffer by the desertion of his customers. Now, it is evident, that though in each of these cases there has been what the world would call reformation, there has not been scriptural repentance. The deficiency of this term consists in its having been employed to denote a mere change in the deeds or in the habits

of the outward man; and if employed as equivalent to repentance, it may delude us into the idea that the change by which we are made meet for a happy eternity is a far more slender and superficial thing than it really is. It is of little importance to be told that the translator means it only in the sense of a reformed conduct, proceeding from the influence of a new and a right principle within. The common meaning of the word will, as in the former instance, be ever and anon intruding itself, and get the better of all the formal cautions, and all the qualifying clauses of our Bible commentators.

But, will not the original word itself throw some light upon this important question? The repentance which is enjoined as a duty—the repentance which is unto salvation—the repentance which sinners undergo when they pass to a state of acceptance with God from a state of enmity against him—these are all one and the same thing, and are expressed by one and the same word in the original language of the New Testament. It is different from the word which expresses the repentance of sorrow; and if translated according to the parts of which it is composed, it signifies neither more nor less than *a change of mind.* This of itself is sufficient to prove the inadequacy of the term reformation—a term which is often applied to a man upon the mere change of his conduct, without ever adverting to the state of his mind, or to the kind of change in motive and in principle which it has undergone. It is true, that there can be no change in the conduct without some change in the inward principle. A reformed drunkard, before careless about health or fortune,

may be so far changed as to become impressed with these considerations; but this change is evidently short of that which the Bible calls repentance toward God. It is a change that may, and has taken place in many a mind, when there was no effectual sense of the God who is above us, and of the eternity which is before us. It is a change, brought about by the prospect and the calculation of worldly advantages; and, in the enjoyment of these advantages, it hath its sole reward. But it is not done unto God, and God will not accept of it as done unto him. Reformation may signify nothing more than the mere surface-dressing of those decencies, and proprieties, and accomplishments, and civil and prudential duties, which, however fitted to secure a man's acceptance in society, may, one and all of them, consist with a heart alienated from God, and having every principle and affection of the inner man away from him. True it is, such a change as the man will reap benefit from, as his friends will rejoice in, as the world will call reformation; but it is not such a change as will make him meet for heaven, and is deficient in its import from what our Saviour speaks of when he says, "I tell you nay, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

There is no single word in the English language which occurs to us as fully equal to the faithful rendering of the term in the original. Renewedness of mind, however awkward a phrase this may be, is perhaps the most nearly expressive of it. Certain it is, that it harmonizes with those other passages of the Bible where the process is described by which saving repentance is brought about. We read of

being transformed by the renewing of our minds, of the renewing of the Holy Ghost, of being renewed in the spirit of our minds. Scriptural repentance, therefore, is that deep and radical change whereby a soul turns from the idols of sin and of self unto God, and devotes every movement of the inner and the outer man, to the captivity of his obedience. This is the change which, whether it be expressed by one word or not in the English language, we would have you well to understand; and reformation or change in the outward conduct, instead of being saving and scriptural repentance, is what, in the language of John the Baptist, we would call a fruit meet for it. But if mischief is likely to arise, from the want of an adequate word in our language, to that repentance which is unto salvation, there is one effectual preservative against it—a firm and consistent exhibition of the whole counsel and revelation of God. A man who is well read in his New Testament, and reads it with docility, will dismiss all his meagre conceptions of repentance, when he comes to the following statements:—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "The carnal mind is enmity against God; and if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." "By the washing of regeneration ye are saved." "Be not then conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing

of your minds." Such are the terms employed to describe the process by which the soul of man is renewed unto repentance; and, with your hearts familiarized to the mighty import of these terms, you will carry with you an effectual guarantee against those false and flimsy impressions, which are so current in the world, about the preparation of a sinner for eternity.

Another delusion which we shall endeavour to expose, is a very mischievous application of the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, contained in the twentieth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew. The interpretation of this parable, the mischief and delusion of which we shall endeavour to lay open, is, that it relates to the call of individuals, and to the different periods in the age of each individual at which this call is accepted by them. We almost know nothing more familiar to us, both in the works of authors, and in the conversation of private Christians, than when the repentance of an aged man is the topic, it is represented as a case of repentance at the eleventh hour of the day. We are far from disputing the possibility of such a repentance, nor should those who address the message of the gospel ever be restrained from the utterance of the free call of the gospel, in the hearing of the oldest and most inveterate sinner whom they may meet with. But what we contend for, is, that this is not the drift of the parable. The parable relates to the call of nations, and to the different periods in the age of the world at which this call was addressed to each of them, and not as we have already observed, to the call of individuals, and to the different periods in

the age of each individual, at which this call is accepted by them.* It is not true that the labourers

* To render our argument more intelligible, we shall briefly state what we conceive to be the true explanation of the parable. In the verses preceding the parable, Peter had stated the whole amount of the surrender that he and his fellow disciples had made by the act of following after Jesus; and it is evident, that they all looked forward to some great temporal remuneration—some share in the glories of the Israelitish monarchy—some place of splendour or distinction under that new government, which they imagined was to be set up in the world; and they never conceived any thing else, than that in this altered state of things, the people of their own country were to be raised to high pre-eminence among the nations which had oppressed and degraded them. It was in the face of this expectation, that our Saviour uttered a sentence, which we meet oftener than once among his recorded sayings in the New Testament, "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." The Israelites, whom God distinguished at an early period of the world, by a revelation of himself, were first invited in the doing of his will (which is fitly enough represented by working in his vineyard) to the possession of his favour, and the enjoyment of his rewards. This offer to work in that peculiar vineyard, where God assigned to them a performance, and bestowed on them a recompense, was made to Abraham and to his descendants at a very early period in history; and a succession of prophets and righteous men were sent to renew the offer, and the communications from God to the world, followed the stream of ages, down to the time of the utterance of this parable. And a few years afterwards, the same offers, and the same invitations, were addressed to another people; and at this late period, at this eleventh hour, the men of those countries which had never before been visited by any authoritative call from heaven, had this call lifted up in their hearing, and many Gentiles accepted that everlasting life, of which the Jews counted themselves unworthy. And as to the people of Israel, who valued themselves so much on their privileges—who had turned all the revelations, by which their ancestors had been honoured, into a matter of distinction and of vain security—who had ever been in the habit of eyeing the profane Gentiles with all that contempt which is laid upon outcasts, this parable received its fulfilment at the time when these Gentiles, by their acceptance of the Saviour, were exalted to an equal place among the chiefest favourites of God; and these Jews, by their refusal of him, had their name rooted out from among the nations—and those first and foremost in all the privileges of religion, are now become the last. Now this we conceive to be the real design of the parable. It was designed to reconcile the minds of the disciples to that part of the economy

who began to work in the vineyard on the first hour of the day, denote those Christians who began to remember their Creator, and to render the obedience of the faith unto his Gospel with their first and earliest education. It is not true, that they who entered into this service on the third hour of the day, denote those Christians, who after a boyhood of thoughtless unconcern about the things of eternity, are arrested in the season of youth, by a visitation of seriousness, and betake themselves to the faith and the following of the Saviour who died for them. It is not true, that they who were hired on the sixth and ninth hours, denote those Christians, who, after having spent the prime of their youthful vigour in alienation from God, and perhaps run out some mad career of guilt and profligacy, put on their Christianity along with the decencies of their sober and established manhood. Neither is it true, that the labourers of the eleventh hour, the men who had stood all day idle, represent those aged converts who have put off their repentance to the last—those men who have renounced the world when they could not help it—those men who have put on Christianity, but not till they had put on their wrinkles—those men who have run the varied stages of depravity, from the frivolous unconcern of

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of God, which was most offensive to their hopes and to their prejudices. It asserted the sovereignty of the Supreme Being in the work of dispensing his calls and his favours among the people whom he had formed. It furnished a most decisive and silencing reproof to the Jews, who were filled with envy against the Gentiles; and who, even those of them that embraced the Christian profession, made an obstinate struggle against the admission of those Gentiles into the church on equal terms with themselves.

a boy, and the appalling enormities of misled and misguided youth, and the deep and determined worldliness of middle age, and the clinging avarice of him, who, while with slow and tottering footsteps he descends the hill of life, has a heart more obstinately set than ever on all its interests, and all its sordid accumulations, but who, when death taps at the door, awakens from his dream, and thinks it now time to shake away his idolatrous affections from the mammon of unrighteousness.

Such are the men who, after having taken their full swing of all that the world could offer, and of all that they could enjoy of it, defer the whole work of preparation for eternity to old age, and for the hire of the labourers of the eleventh hour, do all that they can in the way of sighs, and sorrows, and expiations of penitential acknowledgment. What! will we offer to liken such men to those who sought the Lord early, and who found him? Will we say that he who repents when old, is at all to be compared to him, who bore the whole heat and burden of a life devoted throughout all its stages to the glory and the remembrance of the Creator? Who, from a child, trembled at the word of the Lord, and aspired after a conformity to all his ways? Who, when a young man, fulfilled that most appropriate injunction of the apostle, "Be thou strong?" Who fought it with manly determination against all the enemies of principle by which he was surrounded, and spurned the enticements of vicious acquaintances away from him; and nobly stood it out, even though unsupported and alone, against the unhallowed contempt of a whole multitude of scorners; and with intrepid

defiance to all the assaults of ridicule, maintained a firmness, which no wile could seduce from the posts of vigilance; and cleared his unfaltering way through all the allurements of a perverse and crooked generation. Who, even in the midst of a most withering atmosphere on every side of him, kept all his purposes unbroken, and all his delicacies untainted. Who, with the rigour of self-command, combined the softening lustre which a pure and amiable modesty sheds over the moral complexion of him who abhors that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good, with all the energy of a holy determination. Can that be a true interpretation, which levels this youth of promise and of accomplishment, with his equal in years, who is now prosecuting every guilty indulgence, and crowns the audacity of his rebellion by the mad presumption, that ere he dies, he shall be able to propitiate that God, on the authority of all whose calls, and all whose remonstrances he is now trampling? Or follow each of them to the evening of their earthly pilgrimage—will you say that the penitent of the eleventh hour, is at all to be likened to him who has given the whole of his existence to the work and the labour of Christianity? to him who, after a morning of life adorned with all the gracefulness we have attempted to describe, sustains through the whole of his subsequent history such a high and ever brightening example, that his path is like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day; and every year he lives, the graces of an advancing sanctification form into a richer assemblage of all that is pure, and lovely, and honourable, and of good report; and when old age comes, it brings none of

the turbulence or alarm of an unfinished preparation along with it—but he meets death with the quiet assurance of a man who is in readiness, and hails his message as a friendly intimation; and as he lived in the splendour of ever-increasing acquirements, so he dies in all the radiance of anticipated glory.

This interpretation of the parable cannot be sustained; and we think, that, out of its own mouth, a condemnation may be stamped upon it. Mark this peculiarity. The labourers of the eleventh hour are not men who got the offer before, but men who for the first time received a call to work in the vineyard; and they may therefore well represent the people of a country, who, for the first time, received the overtures of the Gospel. The answer they gave to the question, Why stand you so long idle? was, that no man had hired them. We do not read of any of the labourers of the third, or sixth, or ninth hours, refusing the call at these times, and afterwards rendering a compliance with the evening call, and getting the penny for which they declined the offer of working several hours, but afterwards agreed, when the proposal was made, that they should work one hour only. They had a very good answer to give, in excuse for their idleness. They never had been called before. And the oldest men of a Pagan country have the very same answer to give, on the first arrival of Christian missionaries amongst them. But we have no part nor lot in this parable. We have it not in our power to offer any such apology. There is not one of us who can excuse the impenitency of the past, on the plea that no man had called us. This is a

call that has been sounded in our ears, from our very infancy. Every time we have seen a Bible in our shelves, we have had a call. Every time we have heard a minister in the pulpit, we have had a call. Every time we have heard the generous invitation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye unto the waters," we have had a solemn, and what ought to have been a most impressive, call. Every time that a parent has plied us with a good advice, or a neighbour come forward with a friendly persuasion, we have had a call. Every time that the Sabbath bell has rung for us to the house of God, we have had a call. These are all so many distinct and repeated calls. These are past events in our life, which rise in judgment against us, and remind us, with a justice of argument that there is no evading, that we have no right whatever to the privileges of the eleventh hour.

This, then, is the train to which we feel ourselves directed by this parable. The mischievous interpretation which has been put upon it, has wakened up our alarms, and set us to look at the delusion which it fosters, and, if possible, to drag out to the light of day, the fallacy which lies in it. We should like to reduce every man to the feeling of the alternative of repentance now, or repentance never. We should like to flash it upon your convictions, that, by putting the call away from you now, you put your eternity away from you. We should like to expose the whole amount of that accursed infatuation which lies in delay. We should like to arouse every soul out of its lethargies, and giving no quarter to the plea of a little

more sleep, and a little more slumber, we should like you to feel as if the whole of your future destiny hinged on the very first movement to which you turned yourselves.

The work of repentance must have a beginning; and we should like you to know, that, if not begun to-day, the chance will be less of its being begun to-morrow. And if the greater chance has failed, what hope can we build upon the smaller?—and a chance too that is always getting smaller. Each day, as it revolves over the sinner's head, finds him a harder, and a more obstinate, and a more helplessly enslaved sinner, than before. It was this consideration which gave Richard Baxter such earnestness and such urgency in his "Call." He knew that the barrier in the way of the sinner's return, was strengthened by every act of resistance to the call which urges it. That the refusal of this moment hardened the man against the next attack of a Gospel argument that is brought to bear upon him. That if he attempted you now, and he failed, when he came back upon you, he would find himself working on a more obstinate and uncomplying subject than ever. And therefore it is, that he ever feels as if the present were his only opportunity. That he is now upon his vantage ground, and he gives every energy of his soul to the great point of making the most of it. He will put up with none of your evasions. He will consent to none of your postponements. He will pay respect to none of your more convenient seasons. He tells you, that the matter with which he is charged, has all the urgency of a matter in hand. He speaks to you with as much earnestness as if he knew that

you were going to step into eternity in half an hour. He delivers his message with as much solemnity as if he knew that this was your last meeting on earth, and that you were never to see each other till you stood together at the judgment-seat. He knew that some mighty change must take place in you, ere you be fit for entering into the presence of God; and that the time in which, on every plea of duty and of interest, you should bestir yourselves to secure this, is the present time. This is the distinct point he assigns to himself; and the whole drift of his argument, is to urge an instantaneous choice of the better part, by telling you how you multiply every day the obstacles to your future repentance, if you begin not the work of repentance now.

Before bringing our Essay to a close, we shall make some observations on the mistakes concerning repentance which we have endeavoured to expose, and adduce some arguments for urging on the consciences of our readers the necessity and importance of immediate repentance.

1. The work of repentance is a work which must be done ere we die; for, unless we repent, we shall all likewise perish. Now, the easier this work is in our conception, we will think it the less necessary to enter upon it immediately. We will look upon it as a work that may be done at any time, and let us, therefore, put it off a little longer, and a little longer. We will perhaps look forward to that retirement from the world and its temptations which we figure old age to bring along with it, and falling in with the too common idea, that the evening of life

is the appropriate season of preparation for another world, we will think that the Author is bearing too closely and too urgently upon us, when, in the language of the Bible, he speaks of "*to-day*," while it is called to-day, and will let us off with no other repentance than repentance "*now*,"—seeing that now only is the accepted time, and now only the day of salvation, which he has a warrant to proclaim to us. This dilatory way of it is very much favoured by the mistaken and very defective view of repentance which we have attempted to expose. We have somehow or other got into the delusion, that repentance is sorrow, and little else; and were we called to fix upon the scene where this sorrow is likely to be felt in the degree that is deepest and most overwhelming, we would point to the chamber of the dying man. It is awful to think that, generally speaking, this repentance of mere sorrow is the only repentance of a death-bed. Yes! we will meet with sensibility deep enough and painful enough there—with regret in all its bitterness—with terror mustering up its images of despair, and dwelling upon them in all the gloom of an affrighted imagination; and this is mistaken, not merely for the drapery of repentance, but for the very substance of it. We look forward, and we count upon this—that the sins of a life are to be expunged by the sighing and the sorrowing of the last days of it. We should give up this wretchedly superficial notion of repentance, and cease, from this moment, to be led astray by it. The mind may sorrow over its corruptions at the very time that it is under the power of them. To grieve because we are under

the captivity of sin is one thing—to be released from that captivity is another. A man may weep most bitterly over the perversities of his moral constitution; but to change that constitution is a different affair. Now, this is the mighty work of repentance. He who has undergone it is no longer the servant of sin. He dies unto sin, he lives unto God. A sense of the authority of God is ever present with him, to wield the ascendancy of a great master-principle over all his movements—to call forth every purpose, and to carry it forward, through all the opposition of sin and of Satan, into accomplishment. This is the grand revolution in the state of the mind which repentance brings along with it. To grieve because this work is not done, is a very different thing from the doing of it. A death-bed is the very best scene for acting the first; but it is the very worst for acting the second. The repentance of Judas has often been acted there. We ought to think of the work in all its magnitude, and not to put it off to that awful period when the soul is crowded with other things, and has to maintain its weary struggle with the pains, and the distresses, and the shiverings, and the breathless agonies of a death-bed.

2. There are two views that may be taken of the way in which repentance is brought about, and whichever of them is adopted, delay carries along with it the saddest infatuation. It may be looked upon as a step taken by man as a voluntary agent, and we would ask you, upon your experience of the powers and the performances of humanity, if a death-bed is the time for taking such a step? Is this a time for

a voluntary being exercising a vigorous control over his own movements? When racked with pain, and borne down by the pressure of a sore and overwhelming calamity? Surely the greater the work of repentance is, the more ease, the more time, the more freedom from suffering, is necessary for carrying it on; and, therefore, addressing you as voluntary beings, as beings who will and who do, we call upon you to seek God early that you may find him—to haste, and make no delay in keeping his commandments. The other view is, that repentance is not a self-originating work in man, but the work of the Holy Spirit in him as the subject of its influences. This view is not opposite to the former. It is true that man wills and does at every step in the business of his salvation; and it is as true that God works in him so to will and to do. Take this last view of it then. Look on repentance as the work of God's Spirit in the soul of man, and we are furnished with a more impressive argument than ever, and set on higher vantage for urging you to stir yourselves, and set about it immediately. What is it that you propose? To keep by your present habits, and your present indulgences—and build yourselves up all the while in the confidence that the Spirit will interpose with his mighty power of conversion upon you, at the very point of time that you have fixed upon as convenient and agreeable? And how do you conciliate the Spirit's answer to your call then? Why, by doing all you can to grieve, and to quench, and to provoke him to abandon you now. Do you feel a motion towards repentance at this moment? If you keep it alive, and act upon it, good and well. But if you smother

and suppress this motion, you resist the Spirit—you stifle his movements within you: it is what the impenitent do day after day, and year after year—and is this the way for securing the influences of the Spirit, at the time that you would like them best? When you are done with the world, and are looking forward to eternity because you cannot help it? God says, "My Spirit will not always strive with the children of men." A good and a free Spirit he undoubtedly is, and, as a proof of it, he is now saying, "Let whosoever will, come and drink of the water of life freely." He says so now, but we do not promise that he will say so with effect upon your death-beds, if you refuse him now. You look forward then for a powerful work of conversion being done upon you, and yet you employ yourselves all your life long in raising and multiplying obstacles against it. You count upon a miracle of grace before you die, and the way you take to make yourselves sure of it, is to grieve and offend him while you live, who alone can perform the miracle. O what cruel deceits will sin land us in! and how artfully it pleads for a "little more sleep, and a little more slumber; a little more folding of the hands to sleep." We should hold out no longer, nor make not such an abuse of the forbearance of God: we will treasure up wrath against the day of wrath if we do so. The genuine effect of his goodness is to lead to repentance; let not its effect upon us be to harden and encourage ourselves in the ways of sin. We should cry now for the clean heart and the right spirit; and such is the exceeding freeness of the Spirit of God, that we will be listened to. If we put off the cry till then, the same God

may laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear cometh.

3. Our next argument for immediate repentance is, that we cannot bring forward, at any future period of your history, any considerations of a more prevailing or more powerfully moving influence than those we *may* bring forward at this moment. We can tell you now of the terrors of the Lord. We can tell you now of the solemn mandates which have issued from his throne—and the authority of which is upon one and all of you. We can tell you now, that though, in this dead and darkened world, sin appears but a very trivial affair—for every body sins, and it is shielded from execration by the universal countenance of an entire species lying in wickedness —yet it holds true of God, what is so emphatically said of him, that he cannot be mocked, nor will he endure it that you should riot in the impunity of your wilful resistance to him and to his warnings. We can tell you now, that he is a God of vengeance; and though, for a season, he is keeping back all the thunders of it from a world that he would like to reclaim unto himself, yet, if you put all his expostulations away from you, and will not be reclaimed, these thunders will be let loose upon you, and they will fall on your guilty heads, armed with tenfold energy, because you have not only defied his threats, but turned your back on his offers of reconciliation. These are the arguments by which we would try to open our way to your consciences, and to waken up your fears, and to put the inspiring activity of hope into your bosoms, by laying before you those invitations which are addressed to the

sinner, through the peace-speaking blood of Jesus, and, in the name of a beseeching God, to win your acceptance of them. At no future period can we address arguments more powerful and more affecting than these. If these arguments do not prevail upon you, we know of none others by which a victory over the stubborn and uncomplying will can be accomplished, or by which we can ever hope to beat in that sullen front of resistance wherewith you now so impregnably withstand us. We feel that, if any stout-hearted sinner shall rise from the perusal of these Treatises with an unawakened conscience, and give himself to an act of wilful disobedience, we feel as if, in reference to him, we had made our last discharge, and it fell powerless as water spilt on the ground, that cannot be gathered up again. We would not cease to ply him with our arguments, and tell him, to the hour of death, of the Lord God, merciful and gracious, who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should turn to him, and live. And if in future life we should meet him at the eleventh hour of his dark and deceitful day—a hoary sinner, sinking under the decrepitude of age, and bending on the side of the grave that is open to receive him—even then we would testify the exceeding freeness of the grace of God, and implore his acceptance of it. But how could it be away from our minds that he is not one of the evening labourers of the parable? We had met with him at former periods of his existence, and the offer we make him now we made him then, and he did what the labourers of the third, and sixth, and ninth hours of the parable did not do—he rejected our

call to hire him into the vineyard; and this heartless recollection, if it did not take all our energy away from us, would leave us little else than the energy of despair. And therefore it is, that we speak to you now as if this was our last hold of you. We feel as if on your present purpose hung all the preparations of your future life, and all the rewards or all the horrors of your coming eternity. We will not let you off with any other repentance than repentance now; and if this be refused now, we cannot, with our eyes open to the consideration we have now urged, that the instrument we make to bear upon you afterwards is not more powerful than we are wielding now, coupled with another consideration which we shall insist upon, that the subject on which the instrument worketh, even the heart of man, gathers, by every act of resistance, a more uncomplying obstinacy than before; we cannot, with these two thoughts in our mind, look forward to your future history, without seeing spread over the whole path of it the iron of a harder impenitency —the sullen gloom of a deeper and more determined alienation.

4. Another argument, therefore, for immediate repentance is, that the mind which resists a present call or a present reproof, undergoes a progressive hardening towards all those considerations which arm the call of repentance with all its energy. It is not enough to say, that the instrument by which repentance is brought about, is not more powerful to-morrow than it is to-day; it lends a most tremendous weight to the argument, to say further, that the subject on which this instrument

is putting forth its efficiency, will oppose a firmer resistance to-morrow than it does to-day. It is this which gives a significancy so powerful to the call of "To-day while it is to-day, harden not your hearts;" and to the admonition of "Knowest thou not, O man, that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but after, thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgments of God?" It is not said, either in the one or in the other of these passages, that, by the present refusal, you cut yourself off from a future invitation. The invitation may be sounded in your hearing to the last half hour of your earthly existence, engraved in all those characters of free and gratuitous kindness which mark the beneficent religion of the New Testament. But the present refusal hardens you against the power and tenderness of the future invitation. This is the fact in human nature to which these passages seem to point, and it is the fact through which the argument for immediate repentance receives such powerful aid from the wisdom of experience. It is this which forms the most impressive proof of the necessity of plying the young with all the weight and all the tenderness of earnest admonition, that the now susceptible mind might not turn into a substance harder and more uncomplying than the rock which is broken in pieces by the powerful application of the hammer of the word of God.

The metal of the human soul, so to speak, is like some material substances. If the force you lay upon it do not break it, or dissolve it, it will beat it into hardness. If the moral argument by which it

is plied now, do not so soften the mind as to carry and to overpower its purposes, then, on another day, the argument may be put forth in terms as impressive—but it falls on a harder mind, and, therefore, with a more slender efficiency. If the threat, that ye who persist in sin shall have to dwell with the devouring fire, and to lie down amid everlasting burnings, do not alarm you out of your iniquities from this very moment, then the same threat may be again cast out, and the same appalling circumstances of terror be thrown around it, but it is all discharged on a soul hardened by its inurement to the thunder of denunciations already uttered, and the urgency of menacing threatenings already poured forth without fruit and without efficacy. If the voice of a beseeching God do not win upon you now, and charm you out of your rebellion against him, by the persuasive energy of kindness, then let that voice be lifted in your hearing on some future day, and though armed with all the power of tenderness it ever had, how shall it find its entrance into a heart sheathed by the operation of habit, that universal law, in more impenetrable obstinacy? If, with the earliest dawn of your understanding, you have been offered the hire of the morning labourer and have refused it, then the parable does not say that you are the person who at the third, or sixth, or ninth, or eleventh hour, will get the offer repeated to you. It is true, that the offer is unto all and upon all who are within reach of the hearing of it. But there is all the difference in the world between the impression of a new offer, and of an offer that has already been often heard and as often rejected—an offer which

comes upon you with all the familiarity of a well-known sound that you have already learned how to dispose of, and how to shut your every feeling against the power of its gracious invitations—an offer which, if discarded from your hearts at the present moment, may come back upon you, but which will have to maintain a more unequal contest than before, with an impenitency ever strengthening, and ever gathering new hardness from each successive act of resistance. And thus it is that the point for which we are contending is not to carry you at some future period of your lives, but to carry you at this moment. It is to work in you the instantaneous purpose of a firm and a vigorously sustained repentance; it is to put into you all the freshness of an immediate resolution, and to stir you up to all the readiness of an immediate accomplishment—it is to give direction to the very first footstep you are now to take, and lead you to take it as the commencement of that holy career, in which all old things are done away, and all things become new—it is to press it upon you, that the state of the alternative, at this moment, is "now or never"—it is to prove how fearful the odds are against you, if now you suffer the call of repentance to light upon your consciences, and still keep by your determined posture of careless, and thoughtless, and thankless unconcern about God. You have resisted to-day, and by that resistance you have acquired a firmer metal of resistance against the power of every future warning that may be brought to bear upon you. You have stood your ground against the urgency of the most earnest admonitions, and against the dreadfulness of the most

terrifying menaces. On that ground you have fixed yourself more immoveably than before; and though on some future day the same spiritual thunder be made to play around you, it will not shake you out of the obstinacy of your determined rebellion.

It is the universal law of habit, that the feelings are always getting more faintly and feebly impressed by every repetition of the cause which excited them, and that the mind is always getting stronger in its active resistance to the impulse of these feelings, by every new deed of resistance which it performs; and thus it is, that if you refuse us now, we have no other prospect before us than that your cause is every day getting more desperate and more irrecoverable, your souls are getting more hardened, the Spirit is getting more provoked to abandon those who have so long persisted in their opposition to his movements. God, who says that his Spirit will not always strive with the children of men, is getting more offended. The tyranny of habit is getting every day a firmer ascendancy over you; Satan is getting you more helplessly involved among his wiles and his entanglements; the world, with all the inveteracy of those desires which are opposite to the will of the Father, is more and more lording it over your every affection. And what, we would ask, what is the scene in which you are now purposing to contest it, with all this mighty force of opposition you are now so busy in raising up against you? What is the field of combat to which you are now looking forward, as the place where you are to accomplish a victory over all those formidable enemies whom you are at present arming with such a weight of hostility, as, we say, within a single hair-

breadth of certainty, you will find to be irresistible? O the bigness of such a misleading infatuation! The proposed scene in which this battle for eternity is to be fought, and this victory for the crown of glory is to be won, is a death-bed. It is when the last messenger stands by the couch of the dying man, and shakes at him the terrors of his grisly countenance, that the poor child of infatuation thinks he is to struggle and prevail against all his enemies; against the unrelenting tyranny of habit—against the obstinacy of his own heart, which he is now doing so much to harden—against the Spirit of God who perhaps long ere now has pronounced the doom upon him, "He will take his own way, and walk in his own counsel; I shall cease from striving, and let him alone"—against Satan, to whom every day of his life he has given some fresh advantage over him, and who will not be willing to lose the victim on whom he has practised so many wiles, and plied with success so many delusions. And such are the enemies whom you, who wretchedly calculate on the repentance of the eleventh hour, are every day mustering up in greater force and formidableness against you; and how can we think of letting you go, with any other repentance than the repentance of the precious moment that is now passing over you, when we look forward to the horrors of that impressive scene, on which you propose to win the prize of immortality, and to contest it single-handed and alone, with all the weight of opposition which you have accumulated against yourselves—a death-bed—a languid, breathless, tossing, and agitated death-bed; that scene of feebleness, when the poor man

cannot help himself to a single mouthful—when he must have attendants to sit around him, and watch his every wish, and interpret his every signal, and turn him to every posture where he may find a moments ease, and wipe away the cold sweat that is running over him—and ply him with cordials for thirst, and sickness, and insufferable languor. And this is the time, when occupied with such feelings, and beset with such agonies as these, you propose to crowd within the compass of a few wretched days, the work of winding up the concerns of a neglected eternity!

5. But it may be said, if repentance be what you represent it, a thing of such mighty import, and such impracticable performance, as a *change of mind*, in what rational way can it be made the subject of a precept or an injunction? you would not call upon the Ethiopian to change his skin—you would not call upon the leopard to change his spots; and yet you call upon us to change our minds. You say, "Repent;" and that too in the face of the undeniable doctrine, that man is without strength for the achievement of so mighty an enterprise. Can you tell us any plain and practicable thing that you would have us to perform, and that we may perform to help on this business? This is the very question with which the hearers of John the Baptist came back upon him, after he had told them in general terms to repent, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. He may not have resolved the difficulty, but he pointed the expectations of his countrymen to a greater than he for the solution of it. Now that Teacher has already come, and we live under the

full and the finished splendour of his revelation. O that the greatness and difficulty of the work of repentance, had the effect of shutting you up into the faith of Christ! Repentance is not a paltry, superficial reformation. It reaches deep into the inner man, but not too deep for the searching influences of that Spirit which is at his giving, and which worketh mightily in the hearts of believers. You should go then under a sense of your difficulty to Him. Seek to be rooted in the Saviour, that you may be nourished out of his fulness, and strengthened by his might. The simple cry for a clean heart, and a right spirit, which is raised from the mouth of a believer, brings down an answer from on high, which explains all the difficulty and overcomes it. And if what we have said of the extent and magnitude of repentance, should have the effect to give a deeper feeling than before of the wants under which you labour; and shall dispose you to seek after a closer and more habitual union with Him who alone can supply them, then will our call to repent have indeed fulfilled upon you the appointed end of a preparation for the Saviour. But recollect now is your time, and now is your opportunity, for entering on the road of preparation that leads to heaven. We charge you to enter this road at this moment, as you value your deliverance from hell, and your possession of that blissful place where you shall be for ever with the Lord—we charge you not to parry and to delay this matter, no not for a single hour—we call on you by all that is great in eternity—by all that is terrifying in its horrors—by all that is alluring in its rewards—by all that is binding

in the authority of God—by all that is condemning in the severity of his violated law, and by all that can aggravate this condemnation in the insulting contempt of his rejected gospel;—we call on you by one and all of these considerations, not to hesitate but to flee—not to purpose a return for to-morrow, but to make an actual return *this very day*—to put a decisive end to every plan of wickedness on which you may have entered—to cease your hands from all that is forbidden—to turn them to all that is required—to betake yourselves to the appointed Mediator, and receive through him, by the prayer of faith, such constant supplies of the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, that, from this moment, you may be carried forward from one degree of grace unto another, and from a life devoted to God here, to the elevation of a triumphant, and the joys of a blissful eternity hereafter.

T. C.

St. Andrew's, October, 1825.

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A CALL

TO THE

UNCONVERTED,

TO TURN AND LIVE.

PROPERTY OF
PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY.

THE

REASON OF THIS WORK.

In the short acquaintance I had with that reverend learned servant of Christ, Bishop Usher, he has often been importuning me to write a Directory for the several ranks of professed Christians, which might distinctly give each one their portion; beginning with the unconverted, and then proceeding to the babes in Christ, and then to the strong, and mixing some special helps against the several sins which they are addicted to. By the suddenness of his motion at our first congress, I perceived it was on his mind before: and I told him, that it was both abundantly done by many already, and that his not being acquainted with my weakness, might make him think me fitter for it than I was. But this did not satisfy him, and still he made it his request. I confess I was not moved by his reasons, nor did I apprehend any great need of doing more than had been done in that way; nor that I was likely to do more: and therefore, I parted from him without the least purpose to answer his desire. But since his death, his words often came into my mind, and the great reverence I bore him did the more incline me

to think with some complacency of his motion: and having of late intended to write a Family Directory, I began to apprehend how congruously the forementioned work should lead the way; and the several conditions of men's souls be spoken of, before we come to the several relations. Hereupon I resolved, by God's assistance, to proceed in the following order:—

First, To speak to the impenitent, unconverted sinners, who are not yet so much as purposing to turn, or at least are not setting about the work. And with these I thought a wakening persuasive was a more necessary means than mere directions. For directions suppose men willing to obey them: but the persons we have first to deal with are wilful and fast asleep in sin, and as men that are past feeling, having given themselves over to sin with greediness. My next work must be for those that have some purposes to turn, and are about the work, to give directions for a thorough and true conversion, that they miscarry not in the birth. The third part must be directions for the younger and weaker sort of Christians, that they may be established, built up, and persevere. The fourth part, directions for lapsed and backsliding Christians, for their safe recovery. Besides these, there is intended some persuasions and directions against some special errors of the times, and against some common killing sins: as for directions to doubting troubled consciences, that is done already. And the strong I shall not write directions for, because they are so much taught in God already. And then the last

part is intended more especially for families; as such, directing the several relations in their duty. Some of these are already written: whether I shall have life and leisure for the rest, God only knoweth. And therefore, I shall publish the several parts by themselves as I write them: and the rather because they are intended for men of different states, and because I would not deter them, by the bulk or price, from reading what is written for their benefit.

The use for which this part is published, is, 1st, For masters and parents to read often in their families, if they have servants or children that are yet unconverted. 2d, For all such unconverted persons to read and consider of themselves. 3d, For the richer sort that have any pity for such miserable souls, to give to the unsanctified that need them, if they have not fitter at hand to use or give.

The Lord awaken us to work while it is day, for the saving of our own and others' souls, in subserviency to the blessed God, the Maker, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of souls.

RICHARD BAXTER.

PREFACE.

To all unsanctified Persons that shall read this Book; especially of my hearers in the Borough and Parish of Kidderminster.

MEN AND BRETHREN,

THE eternal God, that made you for a life everlasting, and hath redeemed you by his only Son, when you had lost it and yourselves, being mindful of you in your sin and misery, hath indited the gospel, and sealed it by his Spirit, and commanded his ministers to preach it to the world, that pardon being freely offered you, and heaven being set before you, he might call you off from your fleshly pleasures, and from following after this deceitful world, and acquaint you with the life that you were created and redeemed for, before you are dead and past remedy. He sendeth you not prophets or apostles, that receive their message by immediate revelation; but yet he calleth you by his ordinary ministers, who are commissioned by him to preach the same gospel which Christ and his apostles first delivered. The Lord seeth how you forget him and your latter end, and how light you make of everlasting things, as men that understand not what they have to do or

suffer. He seeth how bold you are in sin, and how fearless of his threatenings, and how careless of your souls, and how the works of infidels are in your lives, while the belief of Christians is in your mouths. He seeth the dreadful day at hand, when your sorrows will begin, and you must lament all this with fruitless cries in torment and desperation: and then the remembrance of your folly will tear your hearts, if true conversion now prevent it not. In compassion to your sinful miserable souls, the Lord, that better knows your case than you can know it, hath made it our duty to speak to you in his name, and to tell you plainly of your sin and misery, and what will be your end, and how sad a change you will shortly see, if yet you go on a little longer. Having bought you at so dear a rate as the blood of his Son Jesus Christ, and made you so free and general a promise of pardon, and grace, and everlasting glory; he commandeth us to tender all this to you, as the gift of God, and to entreat you to consider of the necessity and worth of what he offers. He sees and pities you, while you are drowned in worldly cares and pleasures, eagerly following childish toys, and wasting that short and precious time for a thing of nought, in which you should make ready for an everlasting life; and therefore he hath commanded us to call after you, and tell you how you lose your labour, and are about to lose your souls, and to tell you what greater and better things you might certainly have, if you would hearken to his call. We believe and obey the voice of God; and come to you on his message, who hath charged us to preach, and be instant with you in season and

out of season, to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and show you your transgressions and your sins. But, alas! to the grief of our souls and your undoing, you stop your ears, you stiffen your necks, you harden your hearts, and send us back to God with groans, to tell him that we have done his message, but can do no good on you, nor scarcely get a sober hearing. Oh! that our eyes were as a fountain of tears, that we might lament our ignorant careless people, that have Christ before them, and pardon, and life, and heaven before them, and have not hearts to know or value them! that might have Christ, and grace, and glory, as well as others, if it were not for their wilful negligence and contempt! O that the Lord would fill our hearts with more compassion to these miserable souls, that we might cast ourselves even at their feet, and follow them to their houses, and speak to them with our bitter tears. For, long have we preached to many of them in vain. We study *plainness* to make them understand, and many of them will not understand us; we study serious piercing words, to make them *feel*, but they will not feel. If the *greatest* matters would work with them, we should awake them; if the *sweetest* things would work, we should entice them and win their hearts; if the most *dreadful* things would work, we should at least affright them from their wickedness; if *truth* and certainty would take with them, we should soon convince them; if the God that made them, and the Christ that bought them, might be heard, the case would soon be altered with them; if *scripture* might be heard, we should soon prevail; if *reason*, even the best and

strongest reason, might be heard, we should not doubt but we should speedily convince them; if *experience* might be heard, even their own experience and the experience of all the world, the matter would be mended; yea, if the *conscience* within them might be heard, the case would be better with them than it is. But if nothing can be heard, what then shall we do for them? If the dreadful God of heaven be slighted, who then shall be regarded? If the inestimable love and blood of a Redeemer be made light of, what then shall be valued? If heaven have no desirable glory with them, and everlasting joys be nothing worth; if they can jest at hell, and dance about the bottomless pit, and play with the consuming fire, and that when God and man do warn them of it; what shall we do for such souls as these?

Once more, in the name of the God of heaven, I shall do the message to you which he hath commanded us, and leave it in these standing lines to convert you or condemn you: to change you, or rise up in judgment against you, and to be a witness to your faces, that once you had a *serious call* to turn. Hear all you that are drudges of the world, and the servants of flesh and Satan! that spend your days in looking after prosperity on earth, and drown your conscience in drinking, and gluttony, and idleness, and foolish sports, and know your sin, and yet will sin, as if you set God at defiance, and bid him do his worst and spare not! Hearken, all you that mind not God, and have no heart to holy things, and feel no savour in the word or worship of the Lord, or in the thoughts or mention of eternal

life, that are careless of your immortal souls, and never bestow one hour in inquiring what case they are in, whether sanctified or unsanctified, and whether you are ready to appear before the Lord! Hearken all you that, by sinning in light, have sinned yourselves into infidelity, and do not believe the word of God. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear the gracious and yet dreadful call of God! His eye is all this while upon you. Your sins are registered, and you shall surely hear of them all again. God keepeth the book now; and he will write it all upon your consciences with his terrors; and then you also shall keep it yourselves. O sinners, that you but knew what you are doing, and whom you are all this while offending! The sun itself is darkness before the glory of that Majesty, which you daily abuse and carelessly provoke. The sinning angels were not able to stand before Him, but were cast down to be tormented with devils. And dare such silly worms as you so carelessly offend, and set yourselves against your Maker! O that you did but a little know what case that wretched soul is in, that hath engaged the living God against him! The word of his mouth, that made thee, can unmake thee; the frown of his face will cut thee off and cast thee out into utter darkness. How eager are the devils to be doing with thee that have tempted thee, and do but wait for the word from God to take and use thee as their own! and then in a moment thou wilt be in hell. If God be against thee, all things are against thee: this world is but thy prison, for all thou so lovest it; thou art but reserved in it to the day of wrath, the Judge is

coming, thy soul is even going. Yet a little while, and thy friend shall say of thee 'He is dead;' and thou shalt see the things that thou now dost despise, and feel that which now thou wilt not believe. Death will bring such an argument as thou canst not answer; an argument that shall effectually confute thy cavils against the word and ways of God, and all thy self-conceited dotages. And then how soon will thy mind be changed? Then be an unbeliever if thou canst; stand then to all thy former words, which thou wast wont to utter against a holy and a heavenly life. Make good that cause then before the Lord, which thou wast wont to plead against thy teachers, and against the people that feared God. Then stand to thy old opinions and contemptuous thoughts of the diligence of the saints; make ready now thy strongest reasons, and stand up then before the Judge, and plead like a man for thy fleshly, thy worldly, thy ungodly life. But know that thou wilt have One to plead with, that will not be outfaced by thee; nor so easily put off as we thy fellow-creatures. O poor soul! there is nothing but a slender veil of flesh between thee and that amazing sight, which will quickly silence thee, and turn thy tone, and make thee of another mind! As soon as death hath drawn this curtain, thou shalt see that which will quickly leave thee speechless. And how quickly will that day and hour come! When thou hast had but a few more merry hours, and but a few more pleasant draughts and morsels, and a little more of the honours and riches of the world, thy portion will be spent, and thy pleasures ended, and all is then gone that thou settest thy heart upon;

of all that thou soldest thy Saviour and salvation for, there is nothing left but the heavy reckoning. As a thief, that sits merrily spending the money which he hath stolen, in an alehouse, when men are riding in post-haste to apprehend him, so is it with you. While you are drowned in cares or fleshly pleasures, and making merry with your own shame, death is coming in post-haste to seize upon you, and carry your souls to such a place and state as now you little know or think of. Suppose, when you are bold and busy in your sin, that a messenger were but coming post from London, to apprehend you and take away your lives; though you saw him not, yet if you knew that he was coming, it would mar your mirth, and you would be thinking of the haste he makes, and hearkening when he knocked at your door. O that you could but see what haste death makes, though he yet has not overtaken you! No post so swift. No messenger more sure. As sure as the sun will be with you in the morning, though it hath many thousand and hundred thousand miles to go in the night, so sure will death be quickly with you: and then where is your sport and pleasure? Then will you jest and brave it out? Then will you jeer at them that warned you? Then is it better to be a believing saint or a sensual worldling? And then "whose shall all these things be" that you have gathered? Do you not observe that days and weeks are quickly gone, and nights and mornings come a-pace, and speedily succeed each other? You sleep, but your "damnation slumbereth not;" you linger, "but your judgment this long time lingereth not," to which you are reserved for punishment.

" O that you were wise to understand this, and that you did consider your latter end!" He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear the call of God in this day of his salvation.

O careless sinners! that you did but know the love that you unthankfully neglect, and the preciousness of the blood of Christ which you despise! O that you did but know the riches of the gospel! O that you did but know, a little know, the certainty, and the glory, and blessedness of that everlasting life, which now you will not set your hearts upon, nor be persuaded first and diligently to seek, Heb. xi. 6. and xii. 28. Matt. vi. 13. Did you but know the endless life with God which you now neglect, how quickly would you cast away your sin, how quickly would you change your mind and life, your course and company, and turn the streams of your affections, and lay your care another way? How resolutely would you scorn to yield to such temptations as now deceive you and carry you away? How zealously would you bestir yourselves for that most blessed life? How earnest would you be with God in prayer? How diligent in hearing and learning, and inquiring? How serious in meditating on the laws of God? How fearful of sinning in thought, word, and deed? and how careful to please God and grow in holiness? O what a changed people you would be! And why should not the certain word of God be believed by you, and prevail with you, which openeth to you these glorious and eternal things?

Yea, let me tell you that even here on earth, you little know the difference between the life which you

refuse, and the life which you choose? The sanctified are conversing with God, when you dare scarce think of him, and when you are conversing with but earth and flesh. Their conversation is in heaven, when you are utter strangers to it, and your belly is your god, and you are minding earthly things. They are seeking after the face of God, when you seek for nothing higher than this world. They are busily laying up for an endless life, where "they shall be equal with the angels," when you are taken up with a shadow and a transitory thing of nought. How low and base is your earthly, fleshly, sinful life, in comparison of the noble spiritual life of true believers? Many a time have I looked on such men with grief and pity, to see them trudge about the world, and spend their lives, and care, and labour, for nothing but a little food and raiment, or a little fading pelf, or fleshly pleasures, or empty honours, as if they had no higher things to mind. What difference is there between the lives of these men and of the beasts that perish, that spend their time in working and eating, and living, but that they may live? They taste not of the inward heavenly pleasures upon which believers taste and live. I had rather have a little of their comfort, which the forethoughts of their heavenly inheritance afford them, though I had all their scorns and sufferings with it, than to have all your pleasures and treacherous prosperity. I would not have one of your secret pangs of conscience, and dark and dreadful thoughts of death and the life to come, for all that ever the world hath done for you, or all that you can reasonably hope that it should do. If I were in your unconverted carnal state, and knew

but what I know, and believed but what I now believe, methinks my life would be a foretaste of hell: how oft should I be thinking of the terrors of the Lord, and of the dismal day that is hastening on! Sure death and hell would be still before me. I should think of them by day, and dream of them by night; I should lie down in fear, and rise in fear, and live in fear, lest death should come before I were converted. I should have small felicity in any thing that I possessed, and little pleasure in any company, and little joy in any thing in the world, as long as I knew myself to be under the curse and wrath of God. I should be still afraid of hearing that voice, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." And that fearful sentence would be written upon my conscience, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." O poor sinners! It is a more joyful life than this, that you might live, if you were but willing, but truly willing, to hearken to Christ, and come home to God. You might then draw near to God with boldness, and call him your Father, and comfortably trust him with your souls and bodies. If you look upon the promises, you may say, They are all mine. If upon the curse, you may say, From this I am delivered. When you read the law, you may see what you are saved from. When you read the Gospel, you may see Him that redeemed you, and see the course of his love, and holy life, and sufferings, and trace him in his temptations, tears, and blood, in the work of your salvation. You may see death conquered, and heaven opened, and your resurrection and glorification provided for in the resurrection and glorification of the Lord. If you look

on the saints, you may say, They are my brethren and companions. If on the unsanctified, you may rejoice to think that you are saved from that state. If you look upon the heavens, the sun, and moon, and stars innumerable, you may think and say, My Father's face is infinitely more glorious; it is higher matters that He hath prepared for his saints; yonder is but the outward court of heaven. The blessedness that He hath promised me is so much higher that flesh and blood cannot behold it. If you think of the grave, you may remember that the glorified Spirit, a living Head, and a loving Father, have all so near a relation to your dust, that it cannot be forgotten or neglected, but will more certainly revive than the plants and flowers in the spring: because that the soul is still alive, that is the root of the body; and Christ is alive, that is the root of both. Even death, which is the king of fears, may be remembered and entertained with fear, as being the day of your deliverance from the remnant of sin and sorrow, and the day which you believed, and hoped, and waited for, when you shall see the blessed things which you had heard of, and shall find by present joyful experience what it was to choose the better part, and to be a sincere believing saint. What say you, sir? Is not this a more delightful life, to be assured of salvation, and ready to die, than to live as the ungodly, that have their hearts "overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day comes upon them unawares? Might you not live a comfortable life, if once you were made the heirs of heaven, and sure to be saved when you leave the world? O look about you then,

and think what you do, and cast not away such hopes as these for very nothing. The flesh and world can give you no such hopes or comforts.

And besides all the misery that you bring upon yourselves, you are the troublers of others as long as you are unconverted. You trouble magistrates to rule you by their laws; you trouble ministers by resisting the light and guidance which they offer you. Your sin and misery are the greatest grief and trouble to them in the world. You trouble the commonwealth, and draw the judgments of God upon you. It is you that most disturb the holy peace and order of the churches, and hinder our union and reformation, and are the shame and trouble of the churches where you intrude, and of the places where you are. Ah, Lord! how heavy and sad a case is this, that even in England, where the Gospel doth abound above any other nation in the world, where teaching is so plain and common, and all the helps we can desire are at hand; when the sword has been hewing us, and judgment has run as a fire through the land; when deliverances have relieved us, and so many admirable mercies have engaged us to God, and to the Gospel, and a holy life; that, after all this, our cities, and towns, and countries, shall abound with multitudes of unsanctified men, and swarm with so much sensuality, as every where, to our grief, we see? One would have thought, that after all this light, and all this experience, and all these judgments and mercies of God, the people of this nation should have joined together, as one man, to turn to the Lord, and should have come to their godly teacher, and lamented all their former

sins, and desired him to join with them, in public humiliation, to confess them openly, and beg pardon of them from the Lord, and should have craved his instruction for the time to come, and be glad to be ruled by the Spirit within, and the ministers of Christ without, according to the word of God. One would think that, after such reason and Scripture evidence as they hear, and after all these means and mercies, there should not be an ungodly person left among us, nor a worldling, nor a drunkard, nor a hater of reformation, nor an enemy to holiness, to be found in all our towns and countries. If we be not all agreed about some ceremonies or forms of government, one would think that, before this, we should have been agreed to live a holy and heavenly life, in obedience to God, his word, and ministers, and in love and peace with one another. But, alas! how far are our people from this course! Most of them, in most places, do set their hearts on earthly things, and seek not "first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof," but look on holiness as a needless thing: their families are prayerless, or else a few heartless lifeless words must serve instead of hearty fervent daily prayers (or perhaps only on the Lord's day, in the evening): their children are not taught the knowledge of Christ, and the covenant of grace, nor brought up in the nurture of the Lord, though they firmly promised all this at their baptism.

They instruct not their servants in the matters of salvation; but so their work be done, they care not. There are more railing speeches in their families than gracious words that tend to edification.

How few are the families that fear the Lord, and inquire at his word and ministers how they should live, and what they should do, and are willing to be taught and ruled, and that heartily look after everlasting life! And those few that God hath made so happy are commonly the by-word of their neighbours. When we see some live in drunkenness, and some in pride and worldliness, and most of them have little care of their salvation, though the cause be gross and past all controversy, yet will they hardly be convinced of their misery, and more hardly recovered and reformed; but, when we have done all that we are able to save them from their sins, we leave the most of them as we find them. And if, according to the law of God, we cast them out of the communion of the church, when they have obstinately rejected all our admonitions, they rage at us as if we were their enemies, and their hearts are filled with malice against us, and they will sooner set themselves against the Lord, and his laws, and church, and ministers, than against their deadly sins. This is the doleful case of England: we have magistrates that countenance the ways of godliness, and a happy opportunity for unity and reformation is before us, and faithful ministers long to see the right ordering of the church and of the ordinances of God: but the power of sin in our people doth frustrate almost all. Nowhere can almost a faithful minister set up the unquestionable discipline of Christ, or put back the most scandalous impenitent sinners from the communion of the church and participation of the sacraments, but the most of the people rail at them and revile them; as if these ig-

norant careless souls were wiser than their teachers, or than God himself. And thus, in the day of our visitation, when God calls upon us to reform his church, though magistrates seem willing, and faithful ministers seem willing, yet are the multitude of the people still unwilling, and have so blinded themselves, and hardened their hearts, that, even in these days of light and grace, they are the obstinate enemies of light and grace, and will not be brought by the calls of God to see their folly, and know what is for their good. O that the people of England knew "at least in this their day, the things that belong unto their peace, before they are hid from their eyes!"

O foolish miserable souls! Who hath bewitched your minds into such madness, and your hearts unto such deadness, that you should be such mortal enemies to yourselves, and go on so obstinately towards damnation, that neither the word of God, nor the persuasions of men, can change your minds, or hold your hands, or stop you, till you are past remedy! Well, sinners! this life will not last always; this patience will not wait upon you still. Do not think that you shall abuse your Maker and Redeemer, and serve his enemies, and debase your souls, and trouble the world, and wrong the church, and reproach the godly, and grieve your teachers, and hinder reformation, and all this upon free cost. You know not yet what this must cost you, but you must shortly know, when the righteous God shall take you in hand, who will handle you in another manner than the sharpest magistrates or the plainest dealing pastors did, unless you prevent the everlasting torments, by a sound conversion and a speedy obeying of the call of God,

" He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear," while mercy hath a voice to call.

One objection I find most common in the mouths of the ungodly, especially of late years: they say, ' We can do nothing without God, we cannot have grace, if God will not give it us; and, if he will, we shall quickly turn; if he have not predestinated us, and will not turn us, how can we turn ourselves, or be saved? It is not in him that wills nor in him that runs.' And thus they think they are excused.

I have answered this formerly, and in this book; but let me now say this much. 1. Though you cannot cure yourselves, you can hurt and poison yourselves. It is God that must sanctify your hearts; but who corrupted them? Will you wilfully take poison, because you cannot cure yourselves? Methinks you should the more forbear it. You should the more take heed of sinning, if you cannot mend what sin doth mar. 2. Though you cannot be converted without the special grace of God, yet you must know that God giveth his grace in the use of his holy means which he hath appointed to that end; and common grace may enable you to forbear your gross sinning (as to the outward act) and to use those means. Can you truly say, that you do as much as you are able to do? Are you not able to go by an ale-house door, or to forbear the company that hardeneth you in sin? Are you not able to hear the word, and think of what you heard when you come home, and to consider with yourselves of your own condition and of everlasting things! Are you not able to read good books from day to day, at least on the Lord's day, and to converse with those that fear

the Lord? You cannot say that you have done what you are able. 3. And therefore you must know that you can forfeit the grace and help of God by your wilful sinning or negligence, though you cannot, without grace, turn to God. If you will not do what you can, it is just with God to deny you that grace by which you might do more. 4. And, for God's decrees, you must know that they separate not the end and means, but tie them together. God never decreed to save any but the sanctified, nor to damn any but the unsanctified. God doth as truly decree whether your land this year shall be barren or fruitful, and just how long you shall live in the world, as he hath decreed whether you shall be saved or not; and yet you would think that man but a fool that would forbear ploughing and sowing, and say, 'If God hath decreed that my ground shall bear corn, it will bear, whether I plough and sow or not. If God have decreed that I shall live, I shall live, whether I eat or not; but, if he have not, it is not eating that will keep me alive.' Do you know how to answer such a man, or do you not? If you do, then you know how to answer yourselves; for, the case is alike: God's decree is as peremptory about your bodies as your souls: if you do not, then try first these conclusions upon your bodies, before you venture to try them on your souls: see first whether God will keep you alive without food or raiment, and whether he will give you corn without tillage and labour, and whether he will bring you to your journey's end without your travel or carriage; and, if you speed well in this, then try whether he will bring you to heaven without your diligent use

of means, and sit down and say, We cannot sanctify ourselves.

Well, Sirs, I have but three requests to you, and I have done.

First, That you will seriously read over this small treatise; (and, if you have such as need it in your families, that you would read it over and over to them; and if those that fear God would go now and then to their ignorant neighbours, and read this or some other book to them of this subject, they might be a means of winning souls. If we cannot entreat so small a labour of men for their own salvation, as to read such short instructions as these, they set little by themselves and will most justly perish.

Secondly, When you have read over this book, I would entreat you to go alone and ponder a little what you have read, and bethink you, as in the sight of God, whether it be not true, and do not nearly touch your souls, and whether it be not time to look about you. And also entreat you, that you will upon your knees beseech the Lord that he will open your eyes to understand the truth, and turn your hearts to the love of God, and beg of him all that saving grace which you have so long neglected, and follow it on from day to day, till your hearts be changed. And withal, that you will go to your pastors, (that are set over you to take care of the health and safety of your souls, as physicians do for the health of your bodies,) and desire them to direct you what course to take, and acquaint them with your spiritual estate, that you may have the benefit of their advice and ministerial help.

Or, if you have not a faithful pastor at home, make use of some other in so great a need.

Thirdly, When, by reading, consideration, prayer, and ministerial advice, you are once acquainted with your sin and misery, with your duty and remedy, delay not, but presently forsake your sinful company and courses, and turn to God, and obey his call. As you love your souls, take heed that ye go not on against so loud a call of God, and against your own knowledge and conscience, lest it go worse with you in the day of judgment than with Sodom and Gomorrah. Inquire of God, as a man that is willing to know the truth, and not be a wilful cheater of his soul. Search the holy Scriptures daily, and see whether these things be so or not: try impartially whether it be safer to trust heaven or earth, and whether it be better to follow God or man, the Spirit or the flesh, and better to live in holiness or sin, and whether an unsanctified state be safe for you to abide in one day longer; and when you have found out which is best, resolve accordingly, and make your choice without any more ado. If you will be true to your own souls, and do not love everlasting torments, I beseech you, as from the Lord, that you will but take this reasonable advice. O what happy towns and countries, and what a happy nation might we have, if we could but persuade our neighbours to agree to such a necessary motion! What joyful men would all faithful ministers be, if they could but see their people truly heavenly and holy; this would be the unity, the peace, the safety, the glory, of our churches; the happiness of our neighbours, and the comfort of our souls. Then how comfortably should

we preach pardon and peace to you, and deliver the sacraments, which are the seals of peace to you! And with what love and joy might we live among you! At your death-bed how boldly might we comfort and encourage your departing souls! And, at your burial, how comfortable might we leave you in the grave, in expectation to meet your souls in heaven, and to see your bodies raised to that glory!

But, if still the most of you will go on in a careless, ignorant, fleshly, worldly, or unholy life, and all our desires and labours cannot so far prevail as to keep you from the wilful damning of yourselves, we must then imitate our Lord, who delighteth himself in those few that are jewels, and in a little flock that shall receive the kingdom, when the most shall reap the misery which they sowed. In nature excellent things are few. The world hath not many suns, or moons; it is but a little of the earth that is gold or silver. Princes and nobles are but a small part of the sons of men: and it is no great number that are learned, judicious, or wise, here in the world. And, therefore, if the gate being strait and very narrow, there be but few that find salvation, yet God will have his glory and pleasure in those few. And, when Christ shall come with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, his coming will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all true believers.

And for the rest, as God the Father vouchsafed to create them, and God the Son disdained not to bear the penalty of their sins upon the cross, and did

not judge such sufferings in vain, though he knew that by refusing the sanctification of the Holy Ghost they would finally destroy themselves, so we, that are his ministers, though these be not gathered, judge not our labour wholly lost. See Isaiah xlix. 5.

Reader, I have done with thee, when thou hast perused this book; but sin hath not yet done with thee, even those that thou thoughtest had been forgotten long ago, and Satan hath not yet done with thee, though now he be out of sight, and God hath not yet done with thee, because thou wilt not be persuaded to have done with the deadly reigning sin. I have written thee this persuasive, as one that is going into another world, where the things are seen that I here speak of, and as one that knoweth thou must be shortly there thyself. As ever thou wilt meet me with comfort before the Lord that made us; as ever thou wilt escape the everlasting plagues prepared for the final neglecters of salvation, and for all that are not sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and love not the communion of the saints as members of the holy catholic church; and as ever thou hopest to see the face of Christ the Judge, and of the majesty of the Father, with peace and comfort, and to be received into glory when thou art turned naked out of this world; I beseech thee, I charge thee, to hear and obey the CALL of God, and resolvedly to turn, that thou mayest live. But, if thou wilt not, even when thou hast no true reason for it, but because thou wilt not, I summon thee to answer it before the Lord, and require thee there to bear me witness that I gave thee warning, and that thou wast

not condemned for want of a call to turn and live, but because thou wouldest not believe it and obey it; which also must be the testimony of

Thy serious Monitor,

RICHARD BAXTER.

December 11, 1657.

A

CALL

TO THE

UNCONVERTED.

EZEKIEL XXXIII. 11.

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

It hath been the astonishing wonder of many a man as well as me, to read in the holy Scriptures how few will be saved, and that the greatest part even of those that are called, will be everlastingly shut out of the kingdom of heaven, and be tormented with the devils in eternal fire. Infidels believe not this when they read it, and therefore they must feel it; those that do believe it, are forced to cry out with Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" But nature itself doth teach us all to lay the blame of evil works upon the doers; and therefore when we see any heinous thing done, a principle of justice

doth provoke us to inquire after him that did it, that the evil of the work may return the evil of shame upon the author. If we saw a man killed and cut in pieces by the way, we would presently ask, Oh! who did this cruel deed? If the town was wilfully set on fire, you would ask, what wicked wretch did this? So when we read that the most will be fire-brands of hell for ever, we must needs think with ourselves, How comes this to pass? and whose fault is it? Who is it that is so cruel as to be the cause of such a thing as this? and we can meet with few that will own the guilt. It is indeed confessed by all, that Satan is the cause; but that doth not resolve the doubt, because he is not the principal cause. He doth not force men to sin, but tempts them to it, and leaves it to their own wills whether they will do it or not. He doth not carry men to an alehouse and force open their mouths and pour in the drink; nor doth he hold them that they cannot go to God's service; nor doth he force their hearts from holy thoughts. It lieth therefore between God himself and the sinner; one of them must needs be the principal cause of all this misery, which ever it is, for there is no other to lay it upon; and God disclaimeth it, he will not take it upon him; and the wicked disclaim it usually, and they will not take it upon them, and this is the controversy that is here managing in my text.

The Lord complaineth of the people, and the people think it is the fault of God. The same controversy is handled, chap. xviii. verse 25. they plainly say, "that the way of the Lord is not equal." So here they say, verse 19, "If our

transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how shall we then live?" As if they should say, If we must die, and be miserable, how can we help it? as if it were not their fault but God's. But God, in my text, doth clear himself of it, and telleth them how they may help it if they will, and persuadeth them to use the means, and if they will not be persuaded, he lets them know that it is the fault of themselves; and if this will not satisfy them, he will not forbear to punish them. It is he that will be the Judge, and he will judge them according to their ways; they are no judge of him or of themselves, as wanting authority, and wisdom, and impartiality, nor is it the cavilling and quarrelling with God that shall serve their turn, or save them from the execution of justice at which they murmur.

The words of this verse contain, 1. God's purgation or clearing himself from the blame of their destruction. This he doth not by disowning his law, that the wicked shall die, nor by disowning his judgments and execution according to that law, or giving them any hope that the law shall not be executed; but by professing that it is not their death that he takes pleasure in, but their returning, rather that they may live; and this he confirmeth to them by his oath. 2 An express exhortation to the wicked to return; wherein God doth not only command, but persuade and condescend also to reason the case with them. Why will they die? The direct end of this exhortation is, that they may turn and live. The secondary or reserved ends, upon supposition that this is not attained, are these two:

First, To convince them by the means which he used, that it is not the fault of God if they be miserable. Secondly, To convince them from their manifest wilfulness in rejecting all his commands and persuasions, that it is the fault of themselves, and they die, even because they will die.

The substance of the text doth lie in these observations following:—

Doctrine 1. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

Doctrine 2. It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live if they will but turn.

Doctrine 3. God takes pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation; he had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

Doctrine 4. This is a most certain truth, which because God would not have men to question, he hath confirmed it to them solemnly by his oath.

Doctrine 5. The Lord doth redouble his commands and persuasions to the wicked to turn.

Doctrine 6. The Lord condescendeth to reason the case with them; and asketh the wicked why they will die?

Doctrine 7. If after all this the wicked will not turn, it is not the fault of God that they perish but of themselves; their own wilfulness is the cause of their own damnation; they therefore die because they will die.

Having laid the text open in these propositions, I shall next speak somewhat of each of them in order, though very briefly.

Doctrine 1. *It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn, or die.*

If you will believe God, believe this: There is but one of these two ways for every wicked man, either conversion or damnation. I know the wicked will hardly be persuaded either of the truth or equity of this. No wonder if the guilty quarrel with the law. Few men are apt to believe that which they would not have to be true, and fewer would have that to be true which they apprehend to be against them. But it is not quarrelling with the law, or with the judge, that will save the malefactor. Believing and regarding the law might have prevented his death, but denying and accusing it will but hasten it. If it were not so, an hundred would bring their reason against the law, for one that would bring his reason to the law, and men would rather choose to give their reasons why they should not be punished, than to hear the commands and reasons of their governors which require them to obey. The law was not made for you to judge, but that you might be ruled and judged by it.

But if there be any so blind as to venture to question either the truth or the justice of this law of God, I shall briefly give you that evidence of both, which, methinks, should satisfy a reasonable man.

And first, if you doubt whether this be the word of God, or not, besides an hundred other texts, you may be satisfied by these few:—Matth. xviii. 3. "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and

become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John iii. 3. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are past away; behold, all things are become new." Col. iii. 9, 10. "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Heb. xii. 14. "Without holiness none shall see God." Rom. viii. 8, 9. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Gal. vi. 15. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." 1 Pet. i. 3. "According to his abundant grace he hath begotten us to a lively hope." Verse 23. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speaking, as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Psalm ix. 17. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Psalm xi. 4. "And the Lord loveth the righteous, but the wicked his soul hateth."

As I need not stay to open these texts which are so plain, so I think I need not add any more of that multitude which speak the like. If thou be a man that dost believe the word of God, here is already enough to satisfy thee, that the wicked must be

converted or condemned. You are already brought so far, that you must either confess that this is true, or say plainly, you will not believe the word of God. And if once you be come to that pass, there is but small hopes of you: look to yourselves as well as you can, for it is like you will not be long out of hell. You would be ready to fly in the face of him that should give you the lie; and yet dare you give the lie to God? But if you tell God plainly you will not believe him, blame him not if he never warn you more, or if he forsake you, and give you up as hopeless; for to what purpose should he warn you, if you will not believe him? Should he send an angel from heaven to you, it seems you would not believe. For an angel can speak but the word of God; and if an angel should bring you any other gospel, you are not to receive it, but to hold him accursed. And surely there is no angel to be believed before the Son of God, who came from the Father to bring us this doctrine. If he be not to be believed, then all the angels in heaven are not to be believed. And if you stand on these terms with God, I shall leave you till he deal with you in a more convincing way. God hath a voice that will make you hear. Though he entreat you to hear the voice of his gospel, he will make you hear the voice of his condemning sentence, without entreaty. We cannot make you believe against your wills; but God will make you feel against your wills.

But let us hear what reason you have why you will not believe this word of God, which tells us that the wicked must be converted, or condemned. I know your reason; it is because that you judge it

unlikely that God should be so unmerciful: you think it cruelty to damn men everlastingly for so small a thing as a sinful life. And this leads us to the second thing, which is to justify the equity of God in his laws and judgments.

And first, I think you will not deny but that it is most suitable to an immortal soul, to be ruled by laws that promise an immortal reward, and threaten an endless punishment. Otherwise the law should not be suited to the nature of the subject, who will not be fully ruled by any lower means than the hopes or fears of everlasting things: as it is in cases of temporal punishment, if a law were now made that the most heinous crimes shall be punished with a hundred years' captivity, this might be of some efficacy, as being equal to our lives. But, if there had been no other penalties before the flood, when men lived eight or nine hundred years, it would not have been sufficient, because men would know that they might have so many hundred years impunity afterwards. So it is in our present case.

2. I suppose that you will confess, that the promise of an endless and inconceivable glory is not so unsuitable to the wisdom of God, or the case of man: and why then should you not think so of the threatening of an endless and unspeakable misery!

3. When you find it in the word of God that so it is, and so it will be, do ye think yourselves fit to contradict this word? Will you call your Maker to the bar, and examine his word upon the accusation of falsehood? Will you sit upon him, and judge him by the law of your conceits? Are you wiser, and better, and more righteous than he?

Must the God of heaven come to school to you to learn wisdom? Must Infinite Wisdom learn of folly, and Infinite Goodness be corrected by a swinish sinner, that cannot keep himself an hour clean? Must the Almighty stand at the bar of a worm? O horrid arrogancy of senseless dust! shall ever mole, or clod, or dunghill, accuse the sun of darkness, and undertake to illuminate the world? Where were you when the Almighty made the laws, that he did not call you to his counsel? Surely he made them before you were born, without desiring your advice; and you came into the world too late to reverse them, if you could have done so great a work. You should have stepped out of your nothingness and have contradicted Christ when he was on earth, or Moses before him, or have saved Adam and his sinful progeny from the threatened death, that so there might have been no need of Christ. And what if God withdraw his patience and sustaining power, and let you drop into hell while you are quarrelling with his word, will you then believe that there is a hell?

4. If sin be such an evil that it requireth the death of Christ for its expiation, no wonder if it deserve our everlasting misery.

5. And if the sin of the devils deserved an endless torment, why not also the sin of man?

6. And methinks you should perceive that it is not possible for the best of men, much less for the wicked, to be competent judges of the desert of sin. Alas! we are both blind and partial. You can never know fully the desert of sin, till you fully know the evil of sin; and you can never fully know the evil of sin, till you fully know, 1. The excel-

lency of the soul which it deformeth. 2. And the excellency of holiness which it obliterates. 3. The reason and excellency of the law which it violates. 4. The excellency of the glory which it despises. 5. The excellency and office of reason which it treadeth down. 6. No, nor till you know the infinite excellency, almightiness and holiness of that God against whom it is committed. When you fully know all these, you shall fully know the desert of sin besides. You know that the offender is too partial to judge the law, or the proceeding of his judge. We judge by feeling which blinds our reason. We see, in common worldly things, that most men think the cause is right which is their own, and that all is wrong that is done against them; and let the most wise or just impartial friends persuade them to the contrary, and it is all in vain. There are few children but think the father is unmerciful, or dealeth hardly with them if he whip them. There is scarce the vilest wretch but thinketh the church doth wrong him if they excommunicate him: or scarce a thief or murderer that is hanged, but would accuse the law and judge of cruelty, if that would serve their turn.

7. Can you think that an unholy soul is fit for heaven? Alas, they cannot love God here, nor do him any service which he can accept. They are contrary to God; they loathe that which he most loveth, and love that which he abhorreth. They are incapable of that imperfect communion with him which his saints here partake of. How then can they live in that perfect love of him, and full delights and communion with him, which is the blessedness

of heaven? Ye do not accuse yourselves of unmercifulness, if you make not your enemy your bosom counsellor; or if you take not your swine to bed and board with you: no, nor if you take away his life though he never sinned; and yet you will blame the absolute Lord, the most wise and gracious Sovereign of the world, if he condemn the unconverted to perpetual misery.

USE.

I beseech you now, all that love your souls, that, instead of quarrelling with God and with his word, you will presently stoop to it, and use it for your good. All you that are yet unconverted in this assembly, take this as the undoubted truth of God:—You must, ere long, be converted or condemned; there is no other way but to turn or die. When God, that cannot lie, hath told you this; when you hear it from the Maker and Judge of the world, it is time for him that hath ears to hear. By this time you may see what you have to trust to. You are but dead and damned men, except you will be converted. Should I tell you otherwise, I should deceive you with a lie. Should I hide this from you, I should undo you, and be guilty of your blood, as the verses before my text assure me. "When I say to the wicked man, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." You see then, though this be a rough and unwelcome doctrine, it is such as we must preach and you

must hear. It is easier to hear of hell than feel it. If your necessities did not require it, we would not gall your tender ears with truths that seem so harsh and grievous. Hell would not be so full, if people were but willing to know their case, and to hear and think of it. The reason why so few escape it is, because they strive not to enter in at the strait gate of conversion, and go the narrow way of holiness, while they have time: and they strive not, because they are not awakened to a lively feeling of the danger they are in; and they are not awakened because they are loath to hear or think of it: and that is partly through foolish tenderness and carnal self love, and partly because they do not well believe the word that threateneth it. If you will not thoroughly believe this truth, methinks the weight of it should force you to remember it, and it should follow you, and give you no rest till you are converted. If you had but once heard this word by the voice of an angel, 'Thou must be converted,' or 'condemned: turn, or die;' would it not stick in your minds, and haunt you night and day? So that in your sinning you would remember it, as if the voice were still in your ears, "Turn, or die!" O happy were your souls if it might thus work with you and never be forgotten, or let you alone till it have driven home your hearts to God. But if you will cast it out by forgetfulness or unbelief, how can it work to your conversion and salvation? But take this with you to your sorrow, though you may put this out of your minds, you cannot put it out of the Bible, but there it will stand as a sealed truth, which you shall experimentally know for ever, that there is no other way but turn, or die.

O what is the matter then that the hearts of sinners are not pierced with such a weighty truth? A man would think now, that every unconverted soul that hears these words should be pricked to the heart, and think with themselves, 'This is my own case,' and never be quiet till they found themselves converted. Believe it, sirs, this drowsy careless temper will not last long. Conversion and condemnation are both of them awakening things, and one of them will make you feel ere long. I can foretell it as truly as if I saw it with my eyes, that either grace or hell will shortly bring these matters to the quick, and make you say, "What have I done? what a foolish wicked course have I taken?" The scornful and the stupid state of sinners will last but a little while; as soon as they either turn or die, the presumptuous dream will be at an end, and then their wits and feeling will return.

But I foresee there are two things that are likely to harden the unconverted, and make me lose all my labour, except they can be taken out of the way; and that is the misunderstanding on those two words, the *wicked* and *turn*. Some will think to themselves, 'It is true, the wicked must turn or die; but what is that to me, I am not wicked; though I am a sinner, all men are.' Others will think, 'It is true that we must turn from our evil ways, but I am turned long ago, I hope this is not now to do.' And thus while wicked men think they are not wicked, but are already converted, we lose all our labour in persuading them to turn. I shall therefore, before I go any further, tell you here who are meant by the wicked; and who they are that must turn or die;

and also what is meant by turning, and who they are that are truly converted. And this I have purposely reserved for this place, preferring the method that fits my end.

And here you may observe, that in the sense of the text, a wicked man and a converted man are contraries. No man is a wicked man that is converted; and no man is a converted man that is wicked; so that to be a wicked man and to be an unconverted man, is all one; and therefore in opening one, we shall open both.

Before I can tell you what either wickedness or conversion is, I must go to the bottom, and fetch up the matter from the beginning.

It pleased the great Creator of the world to make three sorts of living creatures. Angels he made pure spirits without flesh, and therefore he made them only for heaven, and not to dwell on earth. Brutes were made flesh, without immortal souls, and therefore they were made only for earth, and not for heaven. Man is of a middle nature, between both, as partaking of both flesh and spirit, and therefore he was made both for heaven and earth. But as his flesh is made to be but a servant to his spirit, so is he made for earth but as his passage or way to heaven, and not that this should be his home or happiness. The blessed state that man was made for, was to behold the glorious majesty of the Lord, and to praise him among his Holy Angels, and to love him, and be filled with his love for ever. And as this was the end that man was made for, so God did give him means that were fitted to the attaining of it. These means were principally two: First the

right inclination and disposition of the mind of man. Secondly, The right ordering of his life and practice. For the first, God suited the disposition of man unto his end, giving him such knowledge of God as was fit for his present state, and a heart disposed and inclined to God in holy love. But yet he did not sin or confirm him in this condition, but, having made him a free agent, he left him in the hands of his own free will. For the second, God did that which belonged to him; that is, he gave him a perfect law, required him to continue in the love of God, and perfectly to obey him. By the wilful breach of this law, man did not only forfeit his hopes of everlasting life, but also turned his heart from God, and fixed it on these lower fleshly things, and hereby blotted out the spiritual image of God from his soul; so that man did both fall short of the glory of God, which was his end, and put himself out of the way by which he should have attained it, and this both as to the frame of his heart, and of his life. The holy inclination and love of his soul to God, he lost, and instead of it he contracted an inclination and love to the pleasing of his flesh, or carnal self, by earthly things; growing strange to God and acquainted with the creature. And the course of this life was suited to the bent and inclination of his heart; he lived to his carnal self, and not to God; he sought the creature, for the pleasing of his flesh, instead of seeking to please the Lord. With this nature or currupt inclination we are all now born into the world; "for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" As a lion hath a fierce and cruel nature before he doth devour; and an adder hath a venom-

ous nature before she sting, so in our infancy we have those sinful natures or inclinations, before we think, or speak, or do amiss. And hence springeth all the sin of our lives; and not only so, but when God hath of his mercy, provided us a remedy, even the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Saviour of our souls, and bring us back to God again, we naturally love our present state, and are loath to be brought out of it, and therefore are set against the means of our recovery: and though custom hath taught us to thank Christ for his good will, yet carnal self persuades us to refuse his remedies, and to desire to be excused, when we are commanded to take the medicines which he offers, and are called to forsake all and follow him to God and glory.

I pray you read over this leaf again, and mark it, for in these few words you have a true description of our natural state, and consequently of wicked man; for every man that is in the state of corrupted nature is a wicked man, and in a state of death.

By this also you are prepared to understand what it is to be converted: to which end you must further know, that the mercy of God, not willing that man should perish in his sin, provided a remedy, by causing his Son to take our nature, and being, in one person, God and man, to become a Mediator between God and man, and by dying for our sins on the cross, to ransom us from the curse of God and the power of the devil. And having thus redeemed us, the Father hath delivered us into his hands as his own. Hereupon the Father and the Mediator do make a new law and covenant for man, not like the first, which gave life to none but the perfectly

obedient, and condemned man for every sin; but Christ hath made a law of grace, or a promise of pardon and everlasting life to all that, by true repentance, and by faith in Christ, are converted unto God; like an act of oblivion, which is made by a prince to a company of rebels, on condition they will lay down arms and come in, and be loyal subjects for the time to come.

But, because the Lord knoweth that the heart of man is grown so wicked, that, for all this, men will not accept of the remedy if they be left to themselves, therefore, the Holy Ghost hath undertaken it as his office to inspire the Apostles, and seal up the Scriptures by miracles and wonders, and to illuminate and convert the sons of the elect.

So by this much you see, that as there are three persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, so each of these persons have their several works, which are eminently ascribed to them.

The Father's works were, to create us, to rule us, as his rational creatures, by the law of nature, and judge us thereby; and in mercy to provide us a Redeemer when we were lost; and to send his Son, and accept his ransom.

The works of the Son for us were these: to ransom and redeem us by his suffering and righteousness; to give out the promise or law of grace, and rule and judge the world as their Redeemer, on terms of grace; and to make intercession for us, that the benefits of his death may be communicated; and to send the Holy Ghost, which the Father also doth by the Son.

The works of the Holy Ghost, for us, are these: to indite the holy Scriptures, by inspiring and guiding the Apostles, and sealing the word, by his miraculous gifts and works, and the illuminating and exciting the ordinary ministers of the gospel, and so enabling them and helping them to publish that word; and by the same word illuminating and converting the souls of men. So that as you could not have been reasonable creatures, if the Father had not created you, nor have had any access to God, if the Son had not redeemed you, so neither can you have a part in Christ, or be saved, except the Holy Ghost do sanctify you.

So that by this time you may see the several causes of this work. The Father sendeth the Son: the Son redeems us and maketh the promise of grace: the Holy Ghost initeth and sealeth this gospel: the Apostles are the secretaries of the Spirit to write it; the preachers of the gospel to proclaim it, and persuade men to open it: and the Holy Ghost doth make their preaching effectual, by opening the hearts of men to entertain it. And all this to repair the image of God upon the soul, and to set the heart upon God again, and take it off the creature and carnal self to which it is revolted, and so to turn the current of the life into a heavenly course, which before was earthly; and all this by entertaining of Christ by faith, who is the Physician of the soul.

By what I have said, you may see what it is to be wicked, and what it is to be converted; which, I think, will be yet plainer to you, if I describe them as consisting of their several parts. And for the

first, a wicked man may be known by these three things:—

First, He is one who placeth his chief affections on earth, and loveth the creature more than God, and his fleshly prosperity above the heavenly felicity. He savoureth the things of the flesh, but neither discerneth nor savoureth the things of the Spirit; though he will say, that heaven is better than earth, yet he doth not really so esteem it to himself. If he might be sure of earth, he would let go heaven, and had rather stay here than be removed thither. A life of perfect holiness in the sight of God, and in his love and praises for ever in heaven, doth not find such liking with his heart, as a life of health, and wealth, and honour here upon earth. And though he falsely profess that he loves God above all, yet indeed he never felt the power of divine love within him, but his mind is more set on the world or fleshly pleasures than on God. In a word, whoever loves earth above heaven, and fleshly prosperity more than God, is a wicked unconverted man.

On the other hand, a converted man is illuminated to discern the loveliness of God, and so far believeth the glory that is to be had with God, that his heart is taken up with it and set more upon it than any thing in this world. He had rather see the face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praises, than have all the wealth or pleasures of the world. He seeth that all things else are vanity, and nothing but God can fill the soul; and therefore let the world go which way it will, he layeth up his treasures and hopes in heaven, and for that he is resolved to let go all. As the fire doth mount up-

ward, and the needle that is touched with the loadstone still turns to the north, so the converted soul is inclined unto God. Nothing else can satisfy him: nor can he find any content and rest but in his love. In a word, all that are converted do esteem and love God better than all the world, and the heavenly felicity is dearer to them than their fleshly prosperity. The proof of what I have said you may find in these places of Scripture, Phil. iii. 18, 21. Matth. vi. 19, 20, 21. Col. iii. 1, 2, 3, 4. Rom. viii. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 18, 23. Psal. lxxiii. 25, 26.

Secondly, A wicked man is one that makes it the principal business of his life to prosper in the world, and retain his fleshly ends. And though he may read, and hear, and do much in the outward duties of religion, and forbear disgraceful sins, yet this is all but by the by, and he never makes it the principal business of his life to please God, and attain everlasting glory, and puts off God with the leavings of the world, and gives him no more service than the flesh can spare, for he will not part with all for heaven.

On the contrary, a converted man is one that makes it the principal care and business of his life to please God, and to be saved, and takes all the blessings of this life but as accommodations in his journey towards another life, and useth the creature in subordination to God; he loves a holy life, and longs to be more holy; he hath no sin but what he hateth, and longeth, and prayeth, and striveth to be rid of. The drift and bent of his life is for God, and if he sin, it is contrary to the very bent of his heart and

life; and therefore he rises again and lamenteth it, and dares not wilfully live in any known sin. There is nothing in this world so dear to him but he can give it up to God, and forsake it for him and the hopes of glory. All this you may see in Col. iii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Matth. vi. 20, 33. Luke xviii. 22, 23, 29. Luke xiv. 18, 24, 26, 27. Rom. viii. 13. Gal. v. 24. Luke xii. 21, &c.

Thirdly, The soul of a wicked man did never truly discern and relish the mystery of redemption, nor thankfully entertain an offered Saviour, nor is he taken up with the love of the Redeemer, nor willing to be ruled by him as a Physician of his soul, that he may be saved from the guilt and power of his sins, and recovered to God; but his heart is insensible of this unspeakable benefit, and is quite against the healing means by which he should be recovered. Though he may be willing to be carnally religious, yet he never resigns up his soul to Christ and to the motions and conduct of his word and Spirit.

On the contrary, the converted soul having felt himself undone by sin, and perceiving that he hath lost his peace with God and hopes of heaven, and is in danger of everlasting misery, doth thankfully entertain the tidings of redemption, and believing in the Lord Jesus as his only Saviour, resigns himself up to him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He takes Christ as the life of his soul, and lives by him, and uses him as a salve for every sore, admitting the wisdom and love of God in this wonderful work of man's redemption. In a word, Christ doth even dwell in their heart by faith,

and the life that he now liveth is by the faith of the Son of God, that loved him, and gave himself for him; yea, it is not so much he that liveth, as Christ in him. For these, see Job i. 11, 12, and iii. 19, 20. Rom. viii. 9. Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9, 10. Gal. ii. 20. Job xv. 2, 3, 4. 1 Cor. i. 20. and ii. 2.

You see now in plain terms from the Word of God, who are the wicked and who are the converted. Ignorant people think, that if a man be no swearer, nor curser, nor railer, nor drunkard, nor fornicator, nor extortioner, nor wrong any body in their dealings, and if they come to church and say their prayers, these cannot be wicked men. Or if a man that hath been guilty of drunkenness, swearing or gaming, or the like vices, do but forbear them for the time to come, they think that this is a converted man. Others think if a man that hath been an enemy, and scorner at godliness, do but approve it, and be hated for it by the wicked, as the godly are, that this must needs be a converted man. And some are so foolish as to think that they are converted, by taking up some new opinion, and falling into some dividing party, as Anabaptists, Quakers, Papists, or such like. And some think, if they have but been affrighted by the fears of hell, and had convictions of conscience; and thereupon have purposed and promised amendment, and take up a life of civil behaviour, and outward religion, that this must needs be true conversion. And these are the poor deluded souls that are like to lose the benefit of all our persuasions; and when they hear that the wicked must turn or die, they think that this is not spoken to them, for they are not wicked, but are

turned already. And therefore it is that Christ told some of the rulers of the Jews who were greater and more civil than the common people, that "publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of Christ before them." Not that a harlot or gross sinner can be saved without conversion; but because it was easier to make these gross sinners perceive their sin and misery, and the necessity of a change, than the more civil sort, who delude themselves by thinking that they are converted already, when they are not.

O sirs, conversion is another kind of work than most are aware of. It is not a small matter to bring an earthly mind to heaven, and to show man the amiable excellencies of God, till he be taken up in such love to him that can never be quenched; to break the heart for sin, and make him fly for refuge to Christ, and thankfully embrace him as the life of his soul; to have the very drift and bent of the heart and life to be changed; so that a man renounceth that which he took for his felicity, and placeth his felicity where he never did before; and lives not to the same end, and drives not on the same design in the world, as he formerly did. In a word, he that is in Christ is a "new creature: old things are past away: behold, all things are become new." He hath a new understanding, a new will and resolution, new sorrows, and desires, and love, and delight; new thoughts, new speeches, new company, (if possible,) and a new conversation. Sin, that before was a jesting matter with him, is now so odious and terrible to him, that he flies from it as from death. The world, that was so lovely in his eyes, doth now appear but as vanity and vexation: God, that was be-

fore neglected, is now the only happiness of his soul: before he was forgotten, and every lust preferred before him, but now he is set next the heart, and all things must give place to him; the heart is taken up in the attendance and observance of him, is grieved when he hides his face, and never thinks itself well without him. Christ himself, that was wont to be slightly thought of, is now his only hope and refuge, and he lives upon him as on his daily bread; he cannot pray without him, nor rejoice without him, nor think, nor speak, nor live without him. Heaven itself, that before was looked upon but as a tolerable reserve, which he hoped might serve his turn better than hell, when he could not stay any longer in the world, is now taken for his home, the place of his only hope and rest, where he shall see, and love, and praise that God that hath his heart already. Hell, that did seem before but as a bugbear to frighten men from sin, doth now appear to be a real misery, that is not to be ventured on, nor jested with. The works of holiness, of which before he was weary, and seemed to make more ado than needs, are now both his recreation, and his business, and the thing that he lives upon. The Bible, which was before to him but almost as a common book, is now as the law of God; as a letter written to him, and subscribed with the name of the Eternal Majesty; it is the rule of his thoughts, and words, and deeds; the commands are binding, the threats are dreadful, and the promises of it speak life to his soul. The godly, that seemed to him but like other men, are now the most excellent and happy on earth. And the wicked that were his play-fel-

lows, are now his grief; and he that could laugh at their sins, is readier now to weep for their sin and misery:—" But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." " In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord: he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." " For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." In short, he hath a new end in his thoughts, and a new way in his endeavours, and therefore his heart and life is new. Before his carnal self was his end, and his pleasure and worldly profits and credit were his way; and now God and everlasting glory is his end, and Christ, and the Spirit, and word, and ordinances. Holiness to God, and righteousness and mercy to men, these are his way. Before, self was the chief ruler, to which the matters of God and conscience must stoop and give place; and now God, in Christ, by the Spirit, word and ministry, is the chief ruler, to whom both self and all the matters of self, must give place. So that this is not a change in one, or two, or twenty points, but in the whole soul, and in the very end and bent of the conversation. A man may step out of one path into another, and yet have his face the same way, and be still going towards the same place; but it is another matter to turn quite back, and take his journey quite the contrary way, to a contrary place. So it is here, a man may turn from drunkenness to thriftiness, and forsake his good fellowship, and other gross disgraceful sins, and set upon some duties of religion, and yet be still going to the same end as

before, intending his carnal self above all, and giving it still the government of his soul; but when he is converted, this self is denied, and taken down, and God is set up, and his face is turned the contrary way: and he that before was addicted to himself, and lived to himself, is now, by sanctification, devoted to God, and liveth unto God. Before he asked himself what he should do with his time, his parts, and his estate, and for himself he used them; but now he asketh God what he shall do with them, and useth them for him. Before he would please God so far as might stand with the pleasure of his flesh and carnal self, but not to any great displeasure of them; but now he will please God, let flesh and self be never so much displeased. This is the great change that God will make upon all that shall be saved.

You can say, that the Holy Ghost is our sanctifier; but do you know what sanctification is? Why, this is what I have now opened to you; and every man and woman in the world must have this, or be condemned to everlasting misery. They must turn or die.

Do you believe all this, sirs, or do you not? Surely you dare not say, you do not; for it is past a doubt or denial. These are not controversies, where one learned pious man is of one mind, and another of another; where one party saith this, and the other saith that. Papists and Anabaptists, and every sect among us that deserve to be called Christians, are all agreed in this that I have said; and if you will not believe the God of truth, and that in a case where every sect and party do believe him, you are utterly inexcusable.

But if you do believe this, how comes it to pass that you live so quietly in an unconverted state? Do you know that you are converted? And can you find this wonderful change upon your souls? Have you been thus born again, and made new? Are not these strange matters to many of you, and such as you never felt upon yourselves? If you cannot tell the day or week of your change, or the very sermon that converted you, yet do you find that the work is done, and such a change indeed there is, and that you have such hearts as are before described? Alas! the most do follow their worldly business, and little trouble their minds with such thoughts. And if they be restrained from scandalous sins, and can say, "I am no whoremonger, nor thief, nor curser, nor swearer, nor tippler, nor extortioner; I go to church, and say my prayers;" they think that this is true conversion, and they shall be saved as well as any. Alas! this is foolish cheating of yourselves. This is too much contempt of an endless glory, and too gross neglect of your immortal souls. Can you make so light of heaven and hell? Your corpse will shortly lie in the dust, and angels or devils will presently seize upon your souls; and every man or woman of you all will shortly be among other company, and in another case than now you are. You will dwell in these houses but a little longer; you will work in your shops and fields but a little longer; you will sit in these seats and dwell on this earth but a little longer; you will see with these eyes, and hear with these ears, and speak with these tongues, but a little longer, till the resurrection-day; and can you make shift to forget this? O what a

place will you shortly be in of joy or torment! O what a sight will you shortly see in heaven or hell! O what thoughts will shortly fill your hearts with unspeakable delight or horror! What work will you be employed in! to praise the Lord with saints and angels, or to cry out in fire unquenchable with devils; and should all this be forgotten? And all this will be endless, and sealed up by an unchangeable decree. Eternity, eternity will be the measure of your joys or sorrows: and can this be forgotten? And all this is true, sirs, most certainly true. When you have gone up and down a little longer, and slept and awaked a few times more, you will be dead and gone, and find all true that now I tell you: and yet can you now so much forget it? You shall then remember that you heard this sermon, and that, this day or this place, you were reminded of these things, and perceive them matters a thousand times greater than either you or I could here conceive; and yet shall they be now so much forgotten?

Beloved friends, if the Lord had not awakened me to believe and lay to heart these things myself, I should have remained in the dark and selfish state, and have perished for ever; but if he have truly made me sensible of them, it will constrain me to compassionate you as well as myself. If your eyes were so far opened as to see hell, and you saw your neighbours, that were unconverted, dragged thither with hideous cries; though they were such as you accounted honest people on earth, and feared no such matter themselves, such a sight would make you go home and think of it, and think again, and make you warn all about you, as that damned worldling, in

Luke xvi. 28. would have had his brethren warned, lest they come to that place of torment. Why, faith is a kind of sight; it is the eye of the soul, the evidence of things not seen. If I believe God, it is next to seeing: and therefore I beseech you excuse me, if I be half as earnest with you about these matters, as if I had seen them. If I must die tomorrow, and it were in my power to come again from another world, and tell you what I had seen, would you not be willing to hear me? and would you not believe, and regard what I should tell you? If I might preach one sermon to you after I am dead, and have seen what is done in the world to come, would you not have me plainly speak the truth, and would you not crowd to hear me, and would you not lay it to heart? But this must not be; God hath his appointed way of teaching you by Scriptures and ministers, and he will not humour unbelievers so far as to send men from the dead to them, and to alter his established way; if any man quarrel with the sun, God will not humour him so far as to set up a clearer light. Friends, I beseech you regard me now, as you would do if I should come from the dead to you; for I can give you as full assurance of the truth of what I say to you, as if I had been there and seen it with my eyes; for it is possible for one from the dead to deceive you; but Jesus Christ can never deceive you; the Word of God delivered in Scripture, and sealed by miracles, and holy workings of the Spirit, can never deceive you. Believe this or believe nothing. Believe and obey this, or you are undone. Now, as ever you believe the word of God, and as ever you care for the salvation of your souls,

let me beg of you this reasonable request, and I beseech you deny me not: That you would, without any more delay, when you are gone from hence, remember what you heard, and enter into an earnest search of your hearts, and say to yourselves—It is so indeed; must I turn or die? Must I be converted or condemned? It is time for me then to look about me before it be too late. O why did not I look after this till now? Why did I venturously put off or neglect so great a business? Was I awake, or in my wits? O blessed God, what a mercy it is that thou didst not cut off my life all this while, before I had any certain hope of eternal life! Well, God forbid that I should neglect this work any longer. What state is my soul in? Am I converted, or am I not? Was ever such a change or work done upon my soul? Have I been illuminated by the word and Spirit of the Lord, to see the odiousness of sin, the need of a Saviour, the love of Christ, and the excellencies of God and glory? Is my heart broken or humbled within me, for my former life? Have I thankfully entertained my Saviour and Lord, that offered himself with pardon and life for my soul? Do I hate my former sinful life, and the remnant of every sin that is in me? Do I fly from them as my deadly enemies? Do I give up myself to a life of holiness and obedience to God? Do I love it, and delight in it? Can I truly say that I am dead to the world and carnal self, and that I live for God and the glory which he hath promised? Hath heaven more of my estimation and resolution than earth? And is God the dearest and highest in my soul? Once, I am sure, I lived

principally to the world and flesh, and God had nothing but some heartless services, which the world could spare, and which were the leavings of the flesh. Is my heart now turned another way? Have I a new design and a new end, and a new train of holy affections? Have I set my hopes and heart in heaven? And is it not the scope, and design, and bent of my heart, to get well to heaven and see the glorious face of God, and live in his love and praise? And when I sin, is it against the habitual bent and design of my heart? And do I conquer all gross sins, and am I weary and willing to be rid of my infirmities. This is the state of unconverted souls. And this must be with me, or I must perish. Is it thus with me indeed, or is it not? It is time to get this doubt resolved before the dreadful Judge resolve it. I am not such a stranger to my own heart and life, but I may somewhat perceive whether I am thus converted or not: if I be not, it will do me no good to flatter my soul with false conceits and hopes. I am resolved no more to deceive myself, but endeavour to know truly whether I be converted or not: that if I be, I may rejoice in it, and glorify my gracious Lord, and comfortably go on till I reach the crown: and if I am not, I may set myself to beg and seek after the grace that should convert me, and may turn without any more delay. For, if I find in time that I am out of the way, by the help of Christ I may turn and be recovered, but if I stay till either my heart be forsaken of God in blindness or hardness, or till I be catched away by death, it is then too late. There is no place for repentance

and conversion then; I know it must be now or never.

Sirs, this is my request to you, that you will but take your hearts to task, and thus examine them till you see if it may be, whether you are converted or not? And if you cannot find it out by your own endeavours, go to your ministers, if they be faithful and experienced men, and desire their assistance. The matter is great, let not bashfulness, nor carelessness hinder you. They are set over you, to advise you, for the saving of your soul, as physicians advise you for the curing of your bodies. It undoes many thousands that they think they are in the way to salvation, when they are not; and think that they are converted when it is no such thing. And then when we call to them daily to turn, they go away as they came; and think that this concerns not them; for they are turned already, and hope they shall do well enough in the way that they are in, at least if they pick the fairest path, and avoid some of the foulest steps, when, alas! all this while they live but to the world and flesh, and are strangers to God and eternal life; and are quite out of the way to heaven. And all this is much because we cannot persuade them to a few serious thoughts of their condition, and spend a few hours in the examining of their states. Is there not many a self-deceiving wretch that hears me this day, that never bestowed one hour, or quarter of an hour, in all their lives, to examine their souls, and try whether they are truly converted or not? O merciful God, that will care for such wretches that care no more for themselves, and that will do so much to save them from hell, and help

them to heaven, who will do so little for it themselves! If all that are in the way to hell, and in the state of damnation, did but know it, they durst not continue in it. The greatest hope that the devil hath of bringing you to damnation without a rescue, is by keeping you blindfold, and ignorant of your state, and making you believe that you may do well enough in the way that you are in. If you knew that you were out of the way to heaven, and were lost for ever if you should die as you are; durst you sleep another night in the state that you are in? Durst you live another day in it? Could you heartily laugh, or be merry in such a state? What! And not know but you may be snatched away to hell in an hour? Sure it would constrain you to forsake your former company and courses, and to betake yourselves to the ways of holiness, and the communion of saints. Sure it would drive you to cry to God for a new heart, and to seek help of those that are fit to counsel you. There are none of you that cares not for being damned. Well, then, I beseech you presently make inquiry into your hearts, and give them no rest till you find out your condition, that if it be good, you may rejoice in it, and go on; and if it be bad, you may presently look about you for recovery, as men that believe they must turn or die. What say you, sirs, will you resolve and promise to be at thus much labour for your own souls? Will you fall upon this self-examination when you come home? Is my request unreasonable? Your consciences know it is not. Resolve on it then, before you stir; knowing how much it concerneth your souls. I beseech you, for the sake

of that God that doth command you, at whose bar you will all shortly appear, that you do not deny me this reasonable request. For the sake of those souls that must turn or die, I beseech you deny me not; even but to make it your business to understand your own conditions, and build upon sure ground, and know, whether you are converted or not; and venture not your souls on negligent security.

But perhaps you will say, What if we should find ourselves yet unconverted, what shall we do then? This question leads me to my second Doctrine; which will do much to the answering of it, to which I shall now proceed.

DOCTRINE 2. *It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will but turn, unfeignedly and thoroughly turn.*

The Lord here professeth that this is what he takes pleasure in, that the wicked turn and live. Heaven is made as sure to the converted, as hell is to the unconverted. Turn and live, is as certain a truth as Turn or die. God was not bound to provide us a Saviour, nor open to us a door of hope, nor call us to repent and turn, when once we had cast ourselves away by sin. But he hath freely done it to magnify his mercy. Sinners, there are none of you shall have cause to go home, and say I preach desperation to you. Do we use to shut the door of mercy against you? O that you would not shut it up against yourselves! Do we use to tell you that God will have no mercy on you, though you turn and be sanctified? When did you ever

hear a preacher say such a word? You that cavil at the preachers of the gospel, for desiring to keep you out of hell, and say, that they preach desperation; tell me if you can, when did you ever hear any sober man say, that there is no hope for you, though you repent, and be converted? No, it is quite contrary that we daily proclaim from the Lord; and whoever is born again, and by faith and repentance doth become a new creature, shall certainly be saved; and so far are we from persuading you to despair of this, that we persuade you not to make any doubt of it. It is life, not death, that is the first part of our message to you; our commission is to offer salvation, certain salvation; a speedy, glorious, everlasting salvation, to every one of you: to the poorest beggar as well as to the greatest lord; to the worst of you, even to drunkards, swearers, worldlings, thieves, yea, to the despisers, and reproachers of the holy way of salvation. We are commanded by the Lord our Master, to offer you a pardon for all that is past, if you will but now at last return and live; we are commanded to beseech and entreat you to accept the offer, and return; to tell you what preparation is made by Christ; what mercy stays for you; what patience waiteth on you; what thoughts of kindness God hath towards you; and how happy, how certainly and unspeakably happy you may be if you will. We have indeed also a message of wrath and death, yea, of a two-fold wrath and death; but neither of them is our principal message. We must tell you of the wrath that is on you already, and the death that you are born under, for the breach of the law of works; but this is but

to show you the need of mercy, and to provoke you to esteem the grace of the Redeemer. And we tell you nothing but the truth, which you must know; for who will seek for physic that knows not that he is sick? Our telling you of your misery, is not that which makes you miserable, but driveth you out to seek for mercy. It is you that have brought this death upon yourselves. We tell you also of another death, even remediless, and much greater torment, that will fall on those that will not be converted. But as this is true, and must be told you, so it is but the last and saddest part of our message. We are first to offer you mercy, if you will turn; and it is only those that will not turn, nor hear the voice of mercy, to whom we must foretell damnation. Will you but cast away your transgressions, delay no longer, but come away at the call of Christ, and be converted, and become new creatures, and we have not a word of damning wrath, or death to speak against you. I do here, in the name of the Lord of life, proclaim to you all that hear me this day, to the worst of you, to the greatest, to the oldest sinner, that you may have mercy and salvation, if you will but turn. There is mercy in God, there is sufficiency in the satisfaction of Christ, the promise is free and full, and universal; you may have life, if you will but turn. But then, as you love your souls, remember what turning it is that Scripture speaks of. It is not to mend the old house, but to pull down all, and build anew on Christ the Rock and sure foundation. It is not to mend somewhat in a carnal course of life, but to mortify the flesh, and live after the Spirit. It is not to

serve the flesh and the world, in a more reformed way, without any scandalous disgraceful sins, and with a certain kind of religiousness; but it is to change your master, and your works, and end; and to set your face the contrary way, and do all for the life that you never saw, and dedicate yourselves, and all you have to God. This is the change that must be made, if you will live.

Yourselves are witnesses now, that it is salvation, and not damnation, that is the great doctrine I preach to you, and the first part of my message to you. Accept of this, and we shall go no further with you; for we would not so much as affright, or trouble you with the name of damnation, without necessity.

But if you will not be saved, there is no remedy, but damnation must take place. For there is no middle place between the two: you must have either life or death.

And we are not only to offer you life, but to show you the grounds on which we do it, and call you to believe that God doth mean, indeed, as he speaks; that the promise is true, and extendeth conditionally to you, as well as others; and that heaven is no fancy, but a true felicity.

If you ask, Where is your commission for this offer? among an hundred texts of Scripture, I will show it to you in these few.

First, you see it here in my text, and the following verses, and in the 18th of Ezekiel, as plain as can be spoken; and in 2 Cor. v. 17, 18 19, 20, 21. you have the very sum of our commission; "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away; behold, all things are become

new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." So Mark xvi. 15, 16. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, (that is with such a converting faith as is expressed) and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned." And Luke xxiv. 46, 47. "Thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance (which is conversion) and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." And, Acts v. 30, 31. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree: him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." And Acts xiii. 38, 39. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." And lest you think this offer is restrained to the Jews, see Gal. vi. 15. "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." And Luke xiv. 17. "Come, for all things are now ready."

You see by this time that we are commanded to offer life to you all, and to tell you from God, that if you will turn, you may live.

Here you may safely trust your souls; for the love of God is the fountain of this offer, John iii. 16. and the blood of the Son of God hath purchased it; the faithfulness and truth of God is engaged to make the promise good; miracles oft sealed the truth of it; preachers are sent through the world to proclaim it; the sacraments are instituted and used for the solemn delivery of the mercy offered to them that will accept it; and the Spirit doth open the heart to entertain it, and is itself the earnest of the full possession. So that the truth of it is past controversy, that the worst of you all, and every one of you, if you will but be converted, may be saved.

Indeed, if you will needs believe that you shall be saved without conversion, then you believe a falsehood; and if I should preach that to you, I should preach a lie. This were not to believe God, but the devil and your own deceitful hearts. God hath his promise of life, and the devil hath his promise of life. God's promise is, Return and live; the devil's promise is, You shall live whether you turn or not. The words of God are, as I have shown you, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Without holiness none shall see God." The devil's word, You may be saved without being born again and converted; you may do well enough without being holy, God doth but frighten you; he is more

merciful than to do as he saith, he will be better to you than his word. And alas, the greatest part of the world believe this word of the devil, before the word of God; just as our sin and misery came into the world. God said to our first parents, "If ye eat ye shall die." And the devil contradicted him, and saith, "Ye shall not die;" and the woman believed the devil before God. So now the Lord saith, Turn or die; and the devil saith, You shall not die, if you do but cry to God for mercy at last, and give over the acts of sin when you can practise it no longer. And this is the word that the world believes. O heinous wickedness, to believe the devil before God!

And yet that is not the worst; but blasphemously they call this a believing and trusting in God, when they put him in shape of Satan, who was a liar from the beginning; and when they believe that the word of God is a lie, they call this a trusting God, and say they believe in him, and trust in him for salvation. Where did ever God say, that the unregenerate, unconverted, unsanctified, shall be saved? Show me such a word in Scripture. I challenge you if you can. Why this is the devil's word, and to believe it is to believe the devil, and the sin that is commonly called presumption; and do you call this a believing and trusting in God? There is enough in the word of God to comfort and strengthen the heart of the sanctified; but not a word to strengthen the hands of wickedness, nor to give men the least hope of being saved, though they be never sanctified.

But if you will turn, and come into the way of

mercy, the mercy of the Lord is ready to entertain you. Then trust God for salvation, boldly and confidently; for he is engaged by his word to save you. He will be a father to none but his children, and he will save none but those that forsake the world, the devil, and the flesh, and come into his family to be members of his Son, and have communion with his saints. But if they will not come in, it is the fault of themselves: his doors are open; he keeps none back; he never sent such a messenger as this to any of you, 'It is now too late; I will not receive thee, though thou be converted.' He might have done so and done you no wrong; but he did not; he doth not to this day. He is still ready to receive you, if you were but ready unfeignedly, and with all your hearts to turn. And the fulness of this truth will yet more appear in the two following doctrines, which I shall therefore next proceed to, before I make any further application of this.

Doctrine 3. *God taketh pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation. He had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.*

I shall first teach you how to understand this, and then clear up the truth of it to you.

And for the first you must observe these following things: 1. A simple willingness or complacency is the first act of the will following the simple apprehension of the understanding, before it proceedeth to compare things together; but the choosing act of the will is a following act, and supposeth the com-

paring practical act of the understanding; and these two acts may often be carried to contrary objects, without any fault at all in the person.

2. An unfeigned willingness may have divers degrees; some things I am so far willing of as that I will do all that lieth in my power to accomplish it, and some things I am truly willing another should do, when yet I will not do all that I am ever able to procure it, having many reasons to dissuade me therefrom, though yet I will do all that belongs to me to do.

3. The will of a ruler, as such, is manifested in making and executing laws: but the will of man in his simple natural capacity, or as absolute lord of his own, is manifested in desiring or resolving of events.

4. A ruler's will as lawgiver, is first and principally that his laws be obeyed, and not at all that the penalty be executed on any, but only on supposition that they will not obey his people; but a ruler's will, as judge, supposeth the law already either kept or broken, and therefore he resolveth our reward or punishment accordingly.

Having given you those necessary distinctions, I shall next apply them to the case in hand, in these following propositions:—

1. It is the gloss of the word and creatures, that in this life we must know God; and so according to the nature of man we ascribe to him understanding and will, removing all the imperfections that we can, because we are capable of no higher positive conceptions of him.

2. And on the same grounds we do, with the

Scripture, distinguish between the acts of God's will, as diversified from the respects or the objects, though as to God's essence they are all one.

3. And the bolder, because that when we speak of Christ, we have the more ground for it from his human nature.

4. And thus we say, that the simple complacency, will, or love of God, is to all that is naturally or morally good, according to the nature and degree of its goodness, and so he hath pleasure in the conversion and salvation of all, which yet will never come to pass.

5. And God, as Ruler and Lawgiver of the world, had so far a practical will for their salvation, as to make them a free deed of gift of Christ and life, and an act of oblivion for all their sins, so be it they will not unthankfully reject it, and to command his messengers to offer this gift to all the world, and persuade them to accept it. And so he doth all that, as lawgiver or promiser, belongs to him to do for their salvation.

6. But yet he resolveth, as Lawgiver, that they that will not turn shall die; and as Judge, when their day of grace is past he will execute that decree.

7. So that he thus unfeignedly willeth the conversion of those that never will be converted, but not as absolute Lord with the fullest efficacious resolution, nor as a thing which he resolveth shall undoubtedly come to pass, or would engage all his power to accomplish. It is in the power of a prince to set a guard upon a murderer, to see that he shall not murder, and be hanged; but if, upon good

reason, he forbear this, and do but send to his subjects to warn and entreat them not to be murderers, I hope he may well say that he would not have them murder and be hanged; he takes no pleasure in it, but rather that they forbear and live, and if he do more for some upon some special reason, he is not bound to do so by all. The king may well say to all murderers and felons in the land, 'I have no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would obey my laws and live; but if you will not, I am resolved, for all this, that you shall die.' The judge may truly say to the thief, or the murderer, 'Alas, I have no delight in thy death; I had rather thou hadst kept the law and saved thy life; but seeing thou hast not, I must condemn thee, or else I should be unjust.' So, though God have no pleasure in your damnation, and therefore calls upon you to return and live, yet he hath pleasure in the demonstration of his own justice, and the executing of his laws, and therefore he is, for all this, fully resolved, that if you will not be converted, you shall be condemned. If God were so much against the death of the wicked, as that he were resolved to do all that he can to hinder it, then no man shall be condemned; whereas Christ telleth you, that few will be saved. But so far God is against your damnation, as that he will teach you, and warn you, and set before you life and death, and offer you your choice, and command his ministers to entreat you not to damn yourselves, but accept his mercy, and so to leave you without excuse. But if this will not do, and if still you be unconverted, he professeth to you, he is resolved on your damnation, and hath com-

manded us to say to you in his name, ' O wicked man thou shalt surely die!' And Christ hath little less than sworn it, over and over, with a " Verily, verily, except ye be converted, and born again, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Mark that he saith "you cannot." It is in vain to hope for it, and in vain to dream that God is willing for it; for it is a thing that cannot be.

In a word, you see then the meaning of the text, that God, the great Lawgiver of the world, doth take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live; though yet he be resolved that none shall live but those that turn; and as a judge even delighteth in justice, and manifesting his hatred of sin, though not in their misery, which they have brought upon themselves, in itself considered.

And for the proofs of the point, I shall be very brief in them, because I suppose you easily believe it already.

1. The very gracious nature of God proclaimed: " And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty;" and frequently elsewhere, may assure you of this, that he hath no pleasure in your death.

2. If God had more pleasure in thy death, than in thy conversion and life, he would not have so frequently commanded thee in his word, to turn; he would not have made thee such promises of life,

if thou wilt but turn; he would not have persuaded thee to it by so many reasons. The tenor of his gospel proveth the point.

3. And his commission that he hath given to the ministers of the gospel, doth fully prove it. If God had taken more pleasure in thy damnation, than in thy conversion and salvation, he would never have charged us to offer you mercy, and to teach you the way of life, both publicly and privately: and to entreat and beseech you to turn and live; to acquaint you with your sins, and foretell you of your danger; and to do all that possibly we can for your conversion, and to continue patiently so doing, though you should hate or abuse us for our pains. Would God have done this, and appointed his ordinances for your good, if he had taken pleasure in your death?

4. It is proved also by the course of his providence. If God had rather you were damned than converted and saved, he would not second his word with his works, and entice you by his daily kindness to himself, and give you all the mercies of this life, which are his means "to lead you to repentance," and bring you so often under his rod to force you to your wits; he would not set so many examples before your eyes, no, nor wait on you so patiently as he does from day to day, and year to year. These are not signs of one that taketh pleasure in your death. If this had been his delight, how easily could he have had thee long ago in hell? How oft, before this, could he have catched thee away in the midst of thy sins with a curse, or oath, or lie in thy mouth, in thy ignorance, and pride, and sensuality? When thou wert last in thy drunkenness, or last de-

riding the ways of God, how easily could he have stopped thy breath, and tamed thee with plagues, and made thee sober in another world! Alas! how small a matter is it for the Almighty to rule the tongue of the profanest railer, and tie the hands of the most malicious persecutor, or calm the fury of the bitterest of his enemies, and make them know that they are but worms? If he would but frown upon thee thou wouldst drop into thy grave. If he gave commission to one of his angels to go and destroy ten thousand sinners, how quickly would it be done! How easily can he lay thee upon the bed of languishing, and make thee lie roaring there in pain, and make thee eat the words of reproach which thou hast spoken against his servants, his word, his worship, and his holy ways, and make thee send to beg their prayers whom thou didst despise in thy presumption? How easily can he lay that flesh under pains and groans, and make it too weak to hold thy soul, and make it more loathsome than the dung of the earth? That flesh which now must have what it loves, and must not be displeased, though God be displeased, and must be humoured in meat, and drink, and clothes, whatever God say to the contrary, how quickly would the frowns of God consume it? When thou wast passionately defending thy sin, and quarrelling with them that would have drawn thee from it, and showing thy spleen against the reprover, and pleading for the works of darkness; how easily could God have snatched thee away in a moment, and set thee before his dreadful Majesty, where thou shouldst see ten thousand times ten thousand glorious angels waiting

on his throne, and have called thee there to plead thy cause, and asked thee, 'What hast thou now to say against thy Creator, his truth, his servants, or his holy ways? Now plead thy cause, and make the best of it thou canst. Now what canst thou say in excuse of thy sins? Now give account of thy worldliness and fleshly life, of thy time, of all the mercies thou hast had.' O how thy stubborn heart would have melted, and thy proud looks be taken down, and thy countenance be appalled, and thy stout words turned into speechless silence, or dreadful cries, if God had but set thee thus at his bar, and pleaded his own cause with thee, which thou hast here so maliciously pleaded against! How easily can he at any time say to thy guilty soul, Come away, and live in that flesh no more till the resurrection, and it cannot resist! A word of his mouth would take off the poise of thy present life, and then all thy parts and powers would stand still; and if he say unto thee, Live no longer, or, Live in hell, thou couldst not disobey.

But God hath yet done none of this, but hath patiently forborn thee, and mercifully upheld thee, and given thee that breath, which thou didst breathe out against him, and given those mercies which thou didst sacrifice to thy flesh, and afforded thee that provision which thou spentest to satisfy thy greedy throat: he gave thee every minute of that time which thou didst waste in idleness, or drunkenness, or worldliness; and doth not all his patience and mercy show that he desired not thy damnation? Can the candle burn without the oil? Can your houses stand without the earth to bear them? No more

can you live an hour without the support of God. And why did he so long support thy life, but to see when thou wouldst bethink thee of the folly of thy ways, and return and live? Will any man purposely put arms into his enemies' hands to resist him, or hold a candle to a murderer that is killing his children, or to an idle servant that plays or sleeps the while? Surely it is to see whether thou wilt at last return and live, that God hath so long waited on thee.

5. It is further proved by the sufferings of his Son, that God taketh no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Would he have ransomed them from death at so dear a rate? Would he have astonished angels and men by his condescension? Would God have dwelt in flesh, and have come in the form of a servant, and have assumed humility into one person with the Godhead; and would Christ have lived a life of suffering, and died a cursed death for sinners, if he had rather taken pleasure in their death? Suppose you saw him but so busy in preaching and healing of them, as you find him in Mark iii. 21. or so long in fasting, as in Matth. iv. or all night in prayer, as in Luke vi. 12. or praying with the drops of blood trickling from him instead of sweat, as Luke xxii. 44. or suffering a cursed death upon the cross, and pouring out his soul as a sacrifice for our sins. Would you have thought these the signs of one that delighteth in the death of the wicked?

And think not to extenuate it by saying, that it was only for his elect: for it was thy sin, and the sin of all the world, that lay upon our Redeemer; and his sacrifice and satisfaction is sufficient for all,

and the fruits of it are offered to one as well as another. But it is true, that it was never the intent of his mind to pardon and save any that would not, by faith and repentance, be converted. If you had seen and heard him weeping and bemoaning the state of disobedience in impenitent people:—"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Or complaining of their stubbornness, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Or if you had seen and heard him on the cross, praying for his persecutors—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"—would you have suspected that he had delighted in the death of the wicked, even of those that perish by their wilful unbelief? When "God hath so loved, (not only loved, but *so loved*,) as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him (by an effectual faith) should not perish, but have everlasting life," I think he hath hereby proved, against the malice of men and angels, that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that they would "turn and live."

6. Lastly, If all this will not yet satisfy you, take his own word, that knoweth best his own mind, or at least believe his oath: but this leadeth me to the fourth doctrine.

Doctrine 4. *The Lord hath confirmed to us by his oath, that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn and live; that he may leave man no pretence to question the truth of it.*

If you dare question his word, I hope you dare not question his oath. As Christ hath solemnly protested that the unregenerate and unconverted cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; so God hath sworn that his pleasure is not in their death, but in their conversion and life. And as the apostle saith, "Because he can swear by no greater, he swaie by himself. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of strife. Wherein God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast." If there be any man that cannot reconcile this truth with the doctrine of predestination, or the actual damnation of the wicked, that is his own ignorance; he hath no pretence left to question or deny therefore the truth of the point in hand; for this is confirmed by the oath of God, and therefore must not be distorted, to reduce it to other points: but doubtful points must rather be reduced to it, and certain truths must be believed to agree with it, though our shallow brains do hardly discern the agreement.

USE.

I do now entreat thee, if thou be an unconverted sinner that hearest these words, that thou wouldst ponder a little upon the forementioned doctrines, and bethink thyself awhile, who it is that takes pleasure in thy sin and damnation. Certainly, it is not God: he hath sworn for his part that he takes no pleasure in it. And I know it is not the pleasing of him that you intend. You dare not say, that you drink, and swear, and neglect holy duties, and quench the motions of the Spirit to please God. That were as if you should reproach the prince, and break his laws, and seek his death, and say, you did all this to please him.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin and death? Not any that bear the image of God, for they must be like-minded to him. God knows, it is small pleasure to your faithful teachers to see you serve your deadly enemy, and madly venture your eternal state, and wilfully run into the flames of hell. It is small pleasure to them to see upon your souls (in the sad effects) such blindness, and hard heartedness, and carelessness, and presumption; such wilfulness in evil, and such unteachableness and stiffness against the ways of life and peace; they know these are marks of death, and of the wrath of God, and they know, from the word of God, what is like to be the end of them, and therefore it is no more pleasure to them, than to a tender physician to see the plague-marks broke out upon his patient. Alas, to foresee your everlasting torments, and know

not how to prevent them! To see how near you are to hell, and we cannot make you believe it and consider it. To see how easily, how certainly you might escape, if we knew but how to make you willing. How fair you are for everlasting salvation, if you would turn and do your best, and make it the care and business of your lives! but you will not do it; if our lives lay on it, we cannot persuade you to it. We study day and night what to say to you, that may convince and persuade you, and yet it is undone: we lay before you the word of God, and show you the very chapter and verse where it is written, that you cannot be saved except you be converted; and yet we leave the most of you as we find you. We hope you will believe the word of God, though you believe not us, and regard it when we show you the plain Scripture for it; but we hope in vain, and labour in vain as to any saving change upon your hearts. And do you think that this is a pleasant thing to us? Many a time, in secret prayer, we are fain to complain to God with sad hearts, 'Alas, Lord, we have spoken it to them in thy name, but they little regard us; we have told them what thou bidst us tell them concerning the danger of an unconverted state, but they do not believe us: we have told them that thou hast protested that "there is no peace to the wicked."' But the worst of them all will scarcely believe that they are wicked; we have shown them thy word, where thou hast said, "that if they live after the flesh they shall die." But they say, they will believe in thee, when they will not believe thee, and that they will trust in thee, when they give no credit to thy word; and when they

hope that the threatenings of thy word are false, they will yet call this a hoping in God; and though we show them where thou hast said, that "when a wicked man dieth, all his hopes perish," yet cannot we persuade them from their deceitful hopes. We tell them what a base unprofitable thing sin is, but they love it, and therefore will not leave it. We tell them how dear they buy this pleasure, and what they must pay for it in everlasting torment, and they bless themselves and will not believe it, but will do as the most do; and because God is merciful, they will not believe him, but will venture their souls, come on it what will. We tell them how ready the Lord is to receive them, and this doth but make them delay their repentance and be bolder in their sin. Some of them say they purpose to repent, but they are still the same; and some say they do repent already, while yet they are not converted from their sins. We exhort them, we entreat them, we offer them our help, but we cannot prevail with them; but they that were drunkards, are drunkards still; and they that were voluptuous flesh-pleasing wretches, are such still; and they that were worldlings, are worldlings still; and they that were ignorant, and proud, and self-conceited, are so still. Few of them will see and confess their sin, and fewer will forsake it, but comfort themselves that all men are sinners, as if there were no difference between a converted sinner and an unconverted. Some of them will not come near us, when we are willing to instruct them, but they know enough already, and need not our instruction; and some of them will give us the hearing, and do what they list; and

most of them are like dead men that cannot feel; so that when we tell them of the matters of everlasting consequence, we cannot get a word of it to their hearts. If we do not obey them, and humour them in baptizing the children of the most obstinately wicked, and giving them the Lord's Supper, and doing all that they would have us, though never so much against the Word of God, they will hate us, and rail at us; but if we beseech them to confess, and forsake their sins, and save their souls, they will not do it. We tell them, if they will but turn, we will deny them none of the ordinances of God, neither baptism to their children, nor the Lord's Supper to themselves, but they will not hear us; they would have us to disobey God, and damn our own souls, to please them; and yet they will not turn and save their own souls to please God. They are wiser in their own eyes than all their teachers; they rage and are confident in their own way, and if we were never so fain, we cannot change them. Lord, this is the case of our miserable neighbours, and we cannot help it; we see them ready to drop into hell, and we cannot help it; we know if they would unfeignedly turn, they might be saved, but we cannot persuade them; if we would beg it of them on our knees, we cannot persuade them to it; if we would beg it of them with tears, we cannot persuade them; and what more can we do?'

These are the secret complaints and moans that many a poor minister is fain to make. And do you think that he hath any pleasure in this? Is it a pleasure to him to see you go on in sin, and cannot stop you? to see you so miserable, and cannot so

much as make you sensible of it? to see you merry, when you are not sure to be an hour out of hell? to think what you must for ever suffer, because you will not turn? and to think what an everlasting life of glory you wilfully despise and cast away? What sadder thing can you bring to their hearts, and how can you devise to grieve them more?

Who is it then that you please by your sin and death? It is none of your understanding godly friends. Alas, it is the grief of their souls to see your misery, and they lament you many a time when you give them little thanks for it, and when you have not hearts to lament yourselves.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin? It is none but three great enemies of God, whom you renounced in your baptism, and now are turned falsely to serve.

1. The devil indeed takes pleasure in your sin and death: for this is the very end of all his temptations; for this he watches night and day; you cannot devise to please him better than to go on in sin. How glad is he when he sees thee going into the alehouse, or other sin, and when he heareth thee curse, or swear, or rail? How glad is he when he heareth thee revile the minister that would draw thee from thy sin, and help to save thee? These are his delight.

2. The wicked are also delighted in it, for it is agreeable to their nature.

3. But I know, for all this, that it is not the pleasing of the devil, that you intend, even when you please him; but it is your own flesh, the greatest and most dangerous enemy, that you intend to

please. It is the flesh that would be pampered, that would be pleased in meat, and drink, and clothing; that would be pleased in your company, and pleased in applause and credit with the world, and pleased in sports, and lusts, and idleness; this is the gulph that devoureth all. This is the very God that you serve, for the Scripture saith of such, "that their bellies are their gods." But I beseech you stay a little and consider the business.

1*st Quest.* Should your flesh be pleased before your Maker? Will you displease the Lord, and displease your teacher, and your godly friends, and all to please your brutish appetites, or sensual desires? Is not God worthy to be the Ruler of your flesh? If he shall not rule it, he will not save it; you cannot in reason expect that he should.

2*d Quest.* Your flesh is pleased with your sin; but is your conscience pleased? Doth not it grudge within you, and tell you sometimes that all is not well, and that your case is not so safe as you make it to be; and should not your souls and consciences be pleased before your corruptible flesh?

3*d Quest.* But is not your flesh preparing for its own displeasure also? It loves the bait, but doth it love the hook? It loves the strong drink and sweet morsels; it loves its ease, and sports and merriment; it loves to be rich, and well spoken of by men, and to be some body in the world; but doth it love the curse of God? Doth it love to stand trembling before his bar, and to be judged to everlasting fire? Doth it love to be tormented with the devils for ever? Take altogether; for there is no separating sin, and hell, but only by faith and true

conversion; if you will keep one, you must have the other. If death and hell be pleasant to thee, no wonder then if you go on in sin: but if they be not (as I am sure they are not) then what if sin were never so pleasant, is it worth the loss of life eternal? Is a little drink, or meat, or ease; is the good word of sinners; is the riches of this world to be valued above the joys of heaven? Or are they worth the sufferings of eternal fire? Sirs, these questions should be considered before you go any further, by every man that hath reason to consider, and that believes he hath a soul to save or lose.

Well, the Lord here sweareth that he hath no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would turn and live; if yet you will go on and die rather than turn, remember it was not to please God that you did it: it was to please the world, and to please yourselves. And if men will damn themselves to please themselves, and run into endless torments for delight, and have not the wit, the hearts, the grace, to hearken to God, or man, that would reclaim them, what remedy but they must take what they get by it, and repent it in another manner, when it is too late? Before I proceed any further in the application, I shall come to the next doctrine, which gives me a fuller ground for it.

Doctrine 5. *So earnest is God for the conversion of sinners, that he doubleth his commands and exhortations, with vehemency—Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?*

This doctrine is the application of the former, as by a use of exhortation, and accordingly I shall handle it. Is there ever an unconverted sinner that heareth these vehement words of God? Is there ever a man or woman in this assembly that is yet a stranger to the renewing sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost? It is a happy assembly, if it be not so with the most. Hearken then to the voice of your Maker, and turn to him by Christ without delay. Would you know the will of God? Why this is his will, that you presently turn. Shall the living God send so earnest a message to his creatures, and should they not obey? 2. Hearken then all you that live after the flesh: the Lord that gave thee thy breath and being, hath sent a message to thee from heaven; and this is his message, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?—He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Shall the voice of the eternal Majesty be neglected? If he do but terribly thunder, thou art afraid. O but this voice doth more nearly concern thee. If he did but tell thee, thou shalt die to-morrow, thou wouldst not make light of it. O but this word concerneth thy life or death everlasting. It is both a command and an exhortation. As if he had said to thee, 'I charge thee upon the allegiance that thou owest to me thy Crea-

tor and Redeemer, that thou renounce the flesh, the world, and the devil, and turn to me that thou mayest live. I condescend to entreat thee, as thou either lovest or fearest him that made thee; as thou lovest thine own life, even thine everlasting life, turn and live: as ever thou wouldst escape eternal misery, turn, turn, for why wilt thou die?' And is there a heart in man, in a reasonable creature, that can once refuse such a message, such a command, such an exhortation as this? O what a thing, then, is the heart of man!

Hearken, then, all that love yourselves, and all that regard your own salvation; here is the most joyful message that was ever sent to the ears of man, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" You are not yet shut up under desperation. Here is mercy offered you; turn, and you shall have it. O sirs! with what glad and joyful hearts should you receive these tidings! I know this is not the first time that you have heard it; but how have you regarded it, or how do you regard it now? Hear, all you ignorant, careless sinners, the word of the Lord. Hear, all you worldlings, you sensual flesh-pleasers; you gluttons, and drunkards, and whoremongers, and swearers; you railers and backbiters, slanderers and liars—"Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

Hear, all you cold and outside professors, and all that are strangers to the life of Christ, and never knew the power of his cross and resurrection, and never felt your hearts warmed with his love, and live not on him as the strength of your souls—"Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

Hear, all that are void of the love of God, whose hearts are not toward him, nor taken up with the hopes of glory, but set more by your earthly prosperity and delights than by the joys of heaven; all you that are religious but a little by the by, and give God no more than your flesh can spare; that have not denied your carnal selves, and forsaken all that you have for Christ, in the estimation and grounded resolution of your souls, but have some one thing in the world so dear to you, that you cannot spare it for Christ, if he required it, but will rather venture on his displeasure than forsake it—"Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

If you never heard it, or observed it before, remember that you were told from the word of God this day, that if you will but turn, you may live; and if you will not turn, you shall surely die.

What now will you do, sirs? What is your resolution? Will you turn, or will you not? Halt not any longer between two opinions. If the Lord be God, follow him; if your flesh be God, then serve it still. If heaven be better than earth and fleshly pleasures, come away, then, and seek a better country, and lay up your treasure where rust and moths do not corrupt, and thieves cannot break through and steal; and be awakened, at last, with all your might to seek the "kingdom that cannot be moved," and to employ your lives on a higher design, and turn the stream of your cares, and labours, another way than formerly you have done. But if earth be better than heaven, or will do more for you, or last you longer, then keep it, and make your best of it, and follow it still. Sirs, are you

resolved what to do? If you be not, I will set a few more moving considerations before you, to see if reason will make you resolve.

Consider, First, what preparations mercy hath made for your salvation; and what pity it is, that any man should be damned after all this. The time was, when the flaming sword was in the way, and the curse of God's law would have kept thee back, if thou hadst been never so willing to turn to God. The time was, when thyself, and all the friends that thou hast in the world, could never have produced thee the pardon of thy sins past, though thou hadst never so much lamented and reformed them. But Christ hath removed this impediment, by the reason of his blood. The time was, that God was wholly unreconciled, as being not satisfied for the violation of his law; but now he is so far satisfied and reconciled, as that he hath made thee a free act of oblivion, and a free deed of gift of Christ and life, and offereth it to thee, and entreateth thee to accept it; and it may be thine, if thou wilt. For, "he was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and hath committed to us the word of actual reconciliation." Sinners, we are commanded to deliver this message to you all, as from the Lord: "Come, for all things are ready." Are all things ready, and are you unready? God is ready to entertain you, and pardon all that you have done against him, if you will but come. As long as you have sinned, as wilfully as you have sinned, he is ready to cast all behind his back, if you will but come. Though you have been prodigals, and run away from God, and have staid so

long, he is ready even to meet you, and embrace you in his arms, and rejoice in your conversion, if you will but turn. Even the earthly worldlings, and swinish drunkards, will find God ready to bid them welcome, if they will but come. Doth not this turn thy heart within thee? O sinner! if thou have a heart of flesh, and not of stone in thee, methinks this should melt it. Shall the dreadful infinite Majesty of heaven even wait for thy returning, and be ready to receive thee, who hast abused him, and forgotten him so long? Shall he delight in thy conversion, that might at any time glorify his justice in thy damnation? and yet doth it not melt thy heart within thee, and art thou not yet ready to come in? Hast thou not as much reason to be ready to come, as God hath to invite thee and bid thee welcome?

But that is not all: Christ hath done his part on the cross, and made such way for thee to the Father, that, on his account, thou mayest be welcome, if thou wilt come. And yet art thou not ready? A pardon is already expressly granted, and offered thee in the Gospel. And yet art thou not ready? The ministers of the Gospel are ready to assist thee, to instruct thee, and pronounce the absolving words of peace to thy soul; they are ready to pray for thee, and to seal up thy pardon by the administration of the holy sacrament. And yet art thou not ready?

All that fear God about thee, are ready to rejoice in thy conversion, and to receive thee into the communion of saints, and to give thee the right hand

of fellowship, yea, though thou hadst been one that had been cast out of their society: they dare not but forgive where God forgiveth, when it is manifest to them, by thy confession and amendment; they dare not so much as reproach thee with thy former sins, because they know that God will not upbraid thee with them. If thou hadst been never so scandalous, if thou wouldst but heartily be converted and come in, they would not refuse thee, let the world say what they would against it. And are all these ready to receive thee, and yet art thou not ready to come in?

Yea, Heaven itself is ready: the Lord will receive thee into the glory of his saints. As vile a beast as thou hast been, if thou wilt but be cleansed, thou mayest have a place before his throne; his angels will be ready to guard thy soul to the place of joy, if thou do but unfeignedly come in. And is God ready, the sacrifice of Christ ready, the promise ready, and pardon ready? Are ministers ready, and the people of God ready, and heaven itself ready, and angels ready? And all these but waiting for thy conversion; and yet art thou not ready? What! not ready to live, when thou hast been dead so long? Not ready to come to thy right understanding, as the prodigal is said to come to himself, when thou hast been besides thyself so long? Not ready to be saved, when thou art even ready to be condemned? Art thou not ready to lay hold on Christ, that would deliver thee, when thou art even ready to sink into damnation? Art thou not ready to be drawn from hell,

when thou art even ready to be cast remediless into it? Alas, man! dost thou know what thou doest? If thou die unconverted, there is no doubt to be made of thy damnation; and thou art not sure to live an hour. And yet art thou not ready to turn, and to come in? O miserable wretch! hast thou not served the flesh and the devil long enough? Yet hast thou not enough of sin? Is it so good to thee, or so profitable for thee? Dost thou know what it is, that thou wouldest yet have more of it? Hast thou had so many calls, and so many mercies, and so many warnings, and so many examples? Hast thou seen so many laid in the grave, and yet art thou not ready to let go thy sins, and come to Christ? What! after so many convictions, and pangs of conscience, after so many purposes and promises, art thou not yet ready to turn and live? O that thy eyes, thy heart, were opened to know how fair an offer is now made to thee! and what a joyful message it is that we are sent on, to bid thee come, for all things are ready!

II. Consider also, what calls thou hast to turn and live. How many, how loud, how earnest, how dreadful: and yet what encouraging, joyful calls!

For the principal inviter is God himself. He that commandeth heaven and earth, commands thee to turn, and presently, without delay, to turn. He commands the sun to run its course, and to rise upon thee every morning; and though it be so glorious a creature, and many a time bigger than all the earth, yet it obeyeth him, and faileth not one minute of its appointed time. He commandeth

all the planets, and the orbs of heaven, and they obey. He commandeth the sea to ebb and flow, and the whole creation to keep its course, and all obey him: the angels of heaven obey his will, when he sends them to minister to such silly worms as we on earth. And yet if he command but a sinner to turn, he will not obey him. He only thinks himself wiser than God, and he cavils and pleads the cause of sin, and will not obey. If the Lord Almighty say the word, the heavens and all therein obey him: but if he call but a drunkard out of an ale-house, he will not obey: or if he call a worldly fleshly sinner to deny himself, and mortify the flesh, and set his heart upon a better inheritance, he will not obey.

If thou hadst any love in thee, thou wouldst know the voice, and say, 'O this is my Father's call? How can I find in my heart to disobey?' For the sheep of Christ do "know and hear his voice, and they follow him, and he giveth them eternal life." If thou hadst any spiritual life and sense in thee, at least thou wouldst say, 'This call is the dreadful voice of God, and who dare disobey?' For saith the prophet, "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" God is not a man, that thou shouldest dally and trifle with him. Remember what he said to Paul at his conversion, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Wilt thou yet go on and despise his word, and resist his Spirit, and stop thine ear against his call? Who is it that will have the worst of this? Dost thou know whom thou disobeyest, and contendest with, and what thou art doing? It were a far wiser, and

easier task for thee to contend with the thorns, and spurn them with thy bare feet, and beat them with thy bare hands, or put thine head into the burning fire. "Be not deceived, God will not be mocked." Whoever else be mocked, God will not: you had better play with the fire in your thatch, than with the fire of his burning wrath. "For our God is a consuming fire." O how unmeet a match art thou for God! "It is a fearful thing to fall into his hands." And therefore it is a fearful thing to contend with him or resist him. As you love your own souls, take heed what you do. What will you say, if he begin in wrath to plead with you? What will you do if he take you once in hand? will you then strive against his judgment, as now ye do against his grace. "Fury is not in me;" saith the Lord, that is, I delight not to destroy you: I do it as it were unwillingly; but yet "who will set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them; I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me." It is an unequal combat for the briars and stubble to make war with the fire.

And thus you see, who is it that calleth you, that would move you to hear his call, and turn: so consider all by what instruments, and how often, and how earnestly he doth it.

1. Every leaf of the blessed book of God hath as it were a voice, and calls out to thee, "Turn, and live; turn, or thou wilt die." How canst thou open it, and read a leaf, or hear a chapter, and not perceive God bids thee turn?

2. It is the voice of every sermon that thou hear-

est: for what else is the scope and drift of all, but to call and persuade, and entreat thee to turn?

3. It is the voice of many a motion of the Spirit that secretly speaks over these words again, and urgeth thee to turn.

4. It is likely sometime it is the voice of thy own conscience. Art thou not sometimes convinced that all is not well with thee? And doth not thy conscience tell thee that thou must be a new man, and take a new course, and often call upon thee to return?

5. It is the voice of the gracious examples of the godly. When thou seest them live a heavenly life, and fly from the sin which is thy delight, this really calls upon thee to turn.

6. It is the voice of all the works of God: for they also are God's books that teach thee this lesson, by showing thee his greatness and wisdom, and goodness, and calling thee to observe them, and admire the Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." Every time the sun riseth unto thee, it really calleth thee to turn, as if it should say, 'What do I travel and compass the world for, but to declare to men the glory of their Maker, and to light them to do his work? And do I still find thee doing the work of sin, and sleeping out thy life in negligence? Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. It is now high time to awake out of sleep. Let us therefore cast off the works of

darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust thereof." This text was the means of Austin's conversion!

7. It is the voice of every mercy thou dost possess; if thou couldst but hear and understand them, they all cry out unto thee, Turn. Why doth the earth bear thee, but to seek and serve the Lord? Why doth it afford thee its fruits, but to serve him? Why doth the air afford thee breath, but to serve him? Why doth all the creatures serve thee with their labours and their lives, but that thou mightest serve the Lord of them and thee? Why doth he give thee time, and health, and strength, but for to serve him? Why hast thou meat, and drink, and clothes, but for his service? Hast thou any thing which thou hast not received? And if thou didst receive them, it is reason thou shouldst bethink thee, from whom, and to what end and use thou didst receive them. Didst thou never cry to him for help in thy distress, and didst thou not then understand that it was thy part to turn and serve him, if he would deliver thee? He hath done his part, and spared thee yet longer, and tried thee another, and another year; and yet dost thou not turn? You know the parable of the unfruitful fig-tree. When the Lord had said, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" he was entreated to try it one year longer, and then if it proved not fruitful, to cut it down. Christ himself there makes the application

twice over. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." How many years hath God looked for the fruits of love and holiness from thee, and hath found none, and yet he hath spared thee? How many a time, by thy wilful ignorance and carelessness, and disobedience, hast thou provoked justice to say, "Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground?" And yet mercy hath prevailed, and patience hath forborne the killing, damning blow, to this day. If thou hadst the understanding of a man within thee, thou wouldst know that all this calleth thee to turn. "Dost thou think thou shalt still escape the judgment of God? or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds."

8. Moreover, it is the voice of every affliction to call thee to make haste and turn. Sickness and pain cry Turn: and poverty, and loss of friends, and every twig of the chastising rod, cry Turn, and yet wilt thou not hearken to the call? These have come near thee, and made thee feel; they have made thee groan, and can they not make thee turn?

9. The very frame of thy nature and being itself, bespeaketh thy return? Why hast thou reason, but to rule thy flesh, and serve thy Lord? Why hast thou an understanding soul but to learn and know his will and do it? Why hast thou a heart within thee, that can love, and fear, and desire, but

that thou shouldst fear him, and love him, and desire after him?

10. Yea, thine own engagements by promise to the Lord, call upon thee to turn and serve him. Thou hast bound thyself to him by a baptismal covenant, and renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil: this thou hast confirmed by the profession of Christianity, and renewed it at sacraments, and in times of affliction; and wilt thou promise and vow, and never perform and turn to God?

Lay all these together now, and see what should be the issue. The Holy Scriptures call upon thee to turn; the ministers of Christ call upon thee to Turn; the Spirit cries Turn; thy conscience cries Turn; the godly, by persuasions and examples, cry Turn; the whole world, and all the creatures therein that are presented to thy consideration, cry Turn; the patient forbearance of God, cries Turn; all the mercies which thou received, cry Turn; the rod of God's chastisement, cries Turn; thy reason, and the frame of thy nature bespeaks thy turning; and so do all thy promises to God; and yet art thou not resolved to turn?

III. Moreover, poor hard-hearted sinner! Didst thou ever consider upon what terms thou standest all this while with him that calleth on thee to turn? Thou art his own, and owest him thyself, and all thou hast; and may he not command his own? Thou art his absolute servant, and shouldest serve no other master. Thou standest at his mercy, and thy life is in his hand, and he is resolved to save thee upon no other terms; thou hast many malicious enemies, that would be glad if God would but forsake thee,

and let him alone with thee, and leave thee to their will; how quickly would they deal with thee in another manner? And thou canst not be delivered from them but by turning unto God. Thou art fallen under his wrath by thy sin already, and thou knowest not how long his patience will yet wait. Perhaps this is the last year; perhaps the last day; his sword is even at thy heart, while the word is in thine ear; and if thou turn not, thou art a dead and undone man. Were thy eyes but open to see where thou standest, even upon the brink of hell, and to see how many thousands are there already that did not turn, thou wouldest see that it is time to look about thee.

Well, sirs, look inwards now, and tell me, how are your hearts affected with those offers of the Lord? You hear what is his mind: he delighteth not in your death; he calls to you, Turn, turn: it is a fearful sign, if all this move thee not, or if it do but half move thee; and much more, if it make thee more careless in thy misery, because thou hearest of the mercifulness of God. The working of the medicine will partly tell us whether there be any hope of the cure. O what glad tidings would it be to those that are now in hell, if they had but such a message from God! what a joyful word would it be to hear this, "Turn and live." Yea, what a welcome word would it be to thyself, when thou hast felt the wrath of God but an hour! Or, if after a thousand or ten thousand years torment, thou couldest but hear such a word from God, "Turn, and live;" and yet wilt thou neglect it, and suffer us to return without our errand?

Behold, sinners, we are sent here as the messengers of the Lord, to set before you life and death. What say you? which of them will ye choose? Christ standeth as it were by thee, with heaven in one hand, and hell in the other, and offereth thee thy choice, which wilt thou choose? "The voice of the Lord maketh the rocks to tremble." And is it nothing to hear him threaten thee, if thou wilt not turn? Dost thou not understand and feel this voice, "Turn thee, turn thee, why will ye die?" Why? It is the voice of love, of infinite love, of thy best and kindest friend, as thou mightest easily perceive by the motion, and yet canst thou neglect it? It is the voice of pity and compassion. The Lord seeth whether thou art going better than thou dost, which makes him call after thee, "Turn, turn." He seeth what will become of thee, if thou turn not. He thinketh with himself, 'Ah this poor sinner will cast himself into endless torments if he do not turn; I must in justice deal with him according to my righteous law,' and therefore he calleth after thee, Turn, turn. O sinner! If thou did but know the thousandth part as well as God doth, the danger that is near thee, and the misery that thou art running into, we should have no more need to call after thee to turn.

Moreover, this voice that calleth to thee, is the same that hath prevailed with thousands already, and called all to heaven that are now there; and they would not now, for a thousand worlds, that they had made light of it, and not turned to God. Now what are they possessing that turned at God's call? Now they perceive that it was indeed the voice of love

that meant them no more harm than their salvation, and if thou wilt obey the same call, thou shalt come to the same happiness. There are millions that must for ever lament that they turned not; but there is never a soul in heaven that is sorry that they were converted.

Well, sirs, are you yet resolved, or are you not? Do I need to say any more to you, what will you do? Will you turn or not? Speak man in thy heart to God, though you speak not out to me; speak, lest he take thy silence for denial. Speak quickly, lest he never make thee the like offer more. Speak resolvedly, and not waveringly; for he will have no indifferents to be his followers. Say in thy heart now, without any more delay, even before thou stir hence, 'By the grace of God, I am resolved presently to turn. And because I know my own insufficiency, I am resolved to wait on God for his grace, and to follow him in his ways, and forsake my former courses and companions, and give up myself to the guidance of the Lord.'

Sirs, you are not shut up in the darkness of heathenism nor in the desperation of the damned: life is before you; and you may have it on reasonable terms, if you will, yea on free-cost if you will accept it. The way of God lieth plain before you; the church open to you, you may have Christ, and pardon, and holiness, if you will. What say you? Will you, or will you not: if you say nay, or say nothing, and still go on, God is witness, and this congregation is witness, and your own consciences are witnesses how fair an offer you had this day. Remember you might have had Christ, and would

not; remember, when you have lost it, that you might have had eternal life, as well as others, and would not; and all because you would not turn.

But let us come to the next doctrine, and hear your reasons.

DOCTRINE 6. *The Lord condescendeth to reason the case with unconverted sinners, and to ask them why they will die?*

A strange disputation it is, both as to the controversy, and as to the disputants.

1. The controversy, or question propounded to dispute of, is, "Why wicked men will damn themselves?" or, "Why they will rather die than turn;" whether they have any sufficient reason for so doing?

2. The disputants are God and man: the most holy God, and wicked unconverted sinners.

Is it not a strange thing which God doth seem here to suppose, that any man should be willing to die and be damned, yea that this should be the case of the wicked; that is, of the greatest part of the world? but you will say, 'This cannot be; for nature desireth the preservation and felicity of itself; and the wicked are more selfish than others, and not less, and therefore how can any man be willing to be damned?'

To which I answer, 1. It is a certain truth that no man can be willing of any evil as evil, but only as it hath some appearance of good; much less can any man be willing to be eternally tormented. Misery, as such, is desired by none. 2. But yet

for all that, it is most true which God here teacheth us, that the cause why the wicked die and are damned, is because they will die and be damned. And this is true in several respects.

1. Because they will go the way that leads to hell, though they are told by God and man, whither it goes, and whither it ends; and though God hath so often professed in his word, that if they hold on in that way, they shall be condemned; and that they shall not be saved, unless they turn: "There is no peace, (saith the Lord,) unto the wicked." "The way of peace they know not; there is no judgment in their goings; they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not keep peace." They have the word, and the oath of the living God for it, that if they will not turn, they shall not enter into his rest. And yet, wicked they are, and wicked they will be, let God and man say what they will; fleshly they are, and fleshly they will be: worldlings they are, and worldlings they will be, though God hath told them that "the love of the world is enmity to God, and that if any man love the world (in that measure) the love of the Father is not in him:" so that consequently these men are willing to be damned, though not directly; they are willing of the way to hell, and love the certain cause of their torment, though they be not willing of hell itself, and do not love the pain which they must endure.

Is not this the truth of your case, sirs? You would not burn in hell, but you will kindle the fire by your sins, and cast yourselves into it; you would not be tormented with devils for ever, but you will

do that which will certainly procure it in despite of all that can be said against it. It is just as if you would say, 'I will drink this ratsbane, or other poison, but yet I will not die. I will cast myself headlong from the top of a steeple, but yet I will not kill myself: I will thrust this knife into my heart, but yet I will not take away my life: I will put this fire into the thatch of my house, but yet I will not burn it.' Just so it is with wicked men, they will be wicked, and they will live after the flesh, and the world, and yet they would not be damned. But do you not know that the means do lead unto the end? and that God hath, by his righteous law, concluded that ye must repent or perish? He that will take poison, may as well say plainly, I will kill myself; for it will prove no better in the end; though perhaps he loved it for the sweetness of the sugar that was mixed with it; and would not be persuaded that it was poison, but that he might take it and do well enough; but it is not his conceits and confidence that will save his life. So if you will be drunkards, or fornicators, or worldlings, or live after the flesh, you may as well say plainly, We will be damned; for so you shall be unless you turn.—Would you not rebuke the folly of a thief, or murderer, that would say, I will steal, and kill, but I will not be hanged, when he knows that if he does the one, the judge in justice will see that the other be done? If he say, I will steal and murder, he may as well plainly say, I will be hanged; and if you will go on in a carnal life, you may as well say plainly, We will go to hell.

2. Moreover, the wicked will not use those means

without which there is no hope of their salvation. He that will not eat, may as well say plainly, he will not live, unless he can tell how to live without meat. He that will not go his journey, may as well say plainly, he will not come to the end. He that falls into the water, and will not come out, nor suffer another to help him out, may as well say plainly, he will be drowned. So if you be carnal and ungodly, and will not be converted, nor use the means by which you should be converted, but think it more ado than needs, you may as well say plainly, you will be damned; for if you have found out a way to be saved without conversion, you have done that which was never done before.

3. Yea, this is not all; but the wicked are unwilling, even of salvation itself; though they may desire something which they call by the name of heaven, yet heaven itself, considered in the true nature of the felicity, they desire not; yea their hearts are quite against it. Heaven is a state of perfect holiness, and of continual love and praise to God, and the wicked have no heart to this. The imperfect love, and praise, and holiness which is here to be attained, they have no mind of; much less of that which is so much greater: the joys of heaven are of so pure and spiritual a nature, that the heart of the wicked cannot truly desire them.

So that by this time you may see on what ground it is that God supposeth that the wicked are willing of their own destruction. They will not turn, though they must turn or die; they will rather venture on certain misery, than be converted; and then to quit themselves in their sins, they will make

themselves believe that they shall nevertheless escape.

2. And as this controversy is matter of wonder, (that ever men should be such enemies to themselves, as wilfully to cast away their souls,) so are the disputants too:—that God should stoop so low, as thus to plead the case with man, and that man should be so strangely blind and obstinate, as to need all this in so plain a case, yea, and to resist all this, when their own salvation lieth upon the issue.

No wonder if they will not hear us that are men, when they will not hear the Lord himself. As God saith, Ezek. iii. 7. when he sent the prophet to the Israelites, "The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted." No wonder if they can plead against a minister, or a godly neighbour, when they will plead against the Lord himself, even against the plainest passages of his word, and think that they have reason on their side. When they "weary the Lord with their words," they say, "Wherein have we wearied him?" The priests that despised his name durst ask, "Wherein have we despised thy name?" And when they "polluted his altar, and made the tables of the Lord contemptible," they durst say, "Wherein have we polluted thee." But "Wo unto him," saith the Lord, "that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth: shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou?"

Question. But why is it that God will reason the case with man?

Answer—1. Because that man being a reasonable creature, is accordingly to be dealt with, and by reason to be persuaded and overcome, God hath therefore endowed them with reason, that they might use it for him. One would think a reasonable creature should not go against the clearest, the greatest reason in the world, when it is set before him.

2. At least men shall see that God did require nothing of them that was unreasonable; but that what he commandeth them, and whatever he forbiddeth them, he hath all the right reason in the world on his side; and they have good reason to obey him, but none to disobey. And thus even the damned shall be forced to justify God, and confess that it was but reason that they should have turned to him; and they shall be forced to condemn themselves, and confess that they had little reason to cast away themselves by the neglecting of his grace in the day of their visitation.

USE.

Look upon your best and strongest reason, sinners, if you will make good your way. You see now with whom you have to deal. What sayest thou, unconverted sensual wretch? Darest thou venture upon a dispute with God? Art thou able to confute him? Art thou ready to enter the lists? God asketh thee, Why wilt thou die? Art thou furnished with a sufficient answer? Wilt thou undertake to prove that God is mistaken, and that thou art in the right? O what an undertaking is that!

Why, either he or you is mistaken, when he is for your conversion, and you are against it: he calls upon you to turn, and you will not; he bids you do it presently, even to-day, while it is called to-day, and you delay, and think it time enough hereafter. He saith it must be a total change, and you must be holy and new creatures, and born again, and you think that less may serve the turn, and that is enough to patch up the old man, without becoming new. Who is in the right now? God, or you? God calleth you to turn, and to live a holy life, and you will not: by your disobedient lives it appears you will not. If you will, why do you not? Why have you not done it all this while? And why do you not fall upon it yet? Your wills have the command of your lives. We may certainly conclude that you are unwilling to turn, when you do not turn. And why will you not? Can you give any reason for it, that is worthy to be called a reason?

I that am but a worm, your fellow-creature, of a shallow capacity, dare challenge the wisest of you all to reason the case with me, while I plead my Maker's cause; and I need not be discouraged when I know I plead but the cause that God pleadeth, and contend for him that will have the best at last; had I but these two general grounds against you, I am sure that you have no good reason on your side.

I am sure it can be no good reason which is against the God of truth and reason. It cannot be light that is contrary to the sun. There is no knowledge in any creature but what it had from God; and therefore none can be wiser than God.

It were damnable presumption for the highest angel to compare with his Creator: what is it then for a lump of earth, an ignorant sot, that knoweth not himself nor his own soul, that knoweth but little of the things which he seeth, yea, that is more ignorant than many of his neighbours, to set himself against the wisdom of the Lord? It is one of the fullest discoveries of the horrible wickedness of carnal men, and the stark-madness of such as sin, that so silly a mole dare contradict his Maker, and call in question the word of God; yea, that those people in our parishes, that are so beastly ignorant that they cannot give us a reasonable answer concerning the very principles of religion, are yet so wise in their own conceit, that they dare question the plainest truths of God, yea, contradict them, and cavil against them, when they can scarcely speak sense, and will believe them no further than agreeth with their foolish wisdom.

And as I know that God must needs be in the right, so I know the case is so palpable and gross which he pleadeth against, that no man can have reason for it. Is it possible that a man can have any reason to break his Maker's laws, and reason to dishonour the Lord of glory, and reason to abuse the Lord that bought him? Is it possible that a man can have any good reason to damn his own immortal soul? Mark the Lord's question, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Is eternal death a thing to be desired? Are you in love with hell? What reason have you wilfully to perish? If you think you have some reason to sin, should you not remember, that "death is the wages of sin,"

and think whether you have any reason to undo yourselves, body and soul for ever. You should not only ask whether you love the adder, but whether you love the sting? It is such a thing for a man to cast away his everlasting happiness, and to sin against God, that no good reason can be given for it; but the more any one pleads for it, the more mad he showeth himself to be. Had you a lordship, or a kingdom offered you for every sin that you commit, it were not reason, but madness to accept it. Could you by every sin obtain the highest thing on earth that flesh desireth, it were of no considerable value to persuade you in reason to commit it. If it were to please your greatest or dearest friends, or to obey the greatest prince on earth, or to save your lives, or to escape the greatest earthly misery. All these are of no consideration to draw a man in reason to the committing of one sin. If it were a right hand, or a right eye, that would hinder your salvation, it is the most gainful way to cast it away, rather than to go to hell to save it. For there is no saving a part when you lose the whole. So exceeding great are the matters of eternity, that nothing in this world deserveth once to be named in comparison with them; nor can any earthly thing, though it were life, or crowns, or kingdoms, be a reasonable excuse for the neglect of matters of such high and everlasting consequence. A man can have no reason to cross his ultimate end: heaven is such a thing, that if you lose it, nothing can supply the want, or make up the loss; and hell is such a thing, that if you suffer it, nothing can remove your misery, or give you ease and comfort, and therefore nothing

can be a valuable consideration to excuse you for neglecting your own salvation: for, saith our Saviour, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

O, sirs, that you did but know what matters they are that we are now speaking to you of, you would have other kind of thoughts of these things. If the devil could come to them, the saints in heaven, that live in the sight and love of God, and should offer them a cup of ale, or a whore, or merry company, or sports to entice them away from God and glory, I pray you tell me, how do you think they would entertain the motion? Nay, or if he should offer them to be kings on the earth, do you think this would entice them down from heaven? O with what hatred and holy scorn would they reject the motion! And why should you not do so, that have heaven opened to your faith, if you had but faith to see it? There is never a soul in hell but knows, by this time, that it was a mad exchange to let go heaven for fleshly pleasure; and that it is not a little mirth or pleasure, or worldly riches, or honour, or the good will or word of men, that will quench hell fire, or make him a gainer that loseth his soul. O if you had heard what I believe, if you had seen what I believe, and that on the credit of the word of God, you would say there can be no reason to warrant a man to damn his soul; you durst not sleep quietly another night, before you had resolved to turn and live.

If you see a man put his hand into the fire till it burn off, you will marvel at it; but this is a thing that a man may have a reason for, as Bishop

Cranmer had, when he burnt off his hand for subscribing to Popery. If you see a man cut off a leg, or an arm, it is a sad sight: but this is a thing that a man may have a good reason for, as many a man doth to save his life. If you see a man give his body to be burnt to ashes, and to be tormented with strappadoes and racks, and refuse deliverance when it is offered, this is a hard case to flesh and blood: but this a man may have good reason for, as you may see in Heb. xi. 33, 34, 35, 36. and as many a hundred martyrs have done. But for a man to forsake the Lord that made him, and for a man to run into the fire of hell, when he is told of it, and entreated to turn that he may be saved; this is a thing that can have no reason in the world, that is reason indeed, to justify or excuse it. For heaven will pay for the loss of any thing that we can lose to get it, or for any labour which we bestow for it; but nothing can pay for the loss of heaven.

I beseech you now let this word come nearer to your heart. As you are convinced that you have no reason to destroy yourselves, so tell me what reason have you to refuse to turn and live to God? What reason hath the veriest worldling, or drunkard, or ignorant careless sinner of you all, why you should not be as holy as any you know, and be as careful for your souls as any other? Will not hell be as hot to you as to others? Should not your own souls be as dear to you as theirs to them? Hath not God as much authority over you? Why then will you not become a sanctified people, as well as they?

O sirs, when God bringeth the matter down to the very principles of nature, and shows you that

you have no more reason to be ungodly than you have to damn your own souls; if yet you will not understand and turn, it seems a desperate case that you are in.

And now, either you have good reason for what you do, or you have not: if not, will you go against reason itself? Will you do that which you have no reason for? But if you think you have, produce them, and make the best of your matter. Reason the case a little with me, your fellow-creature, which is far easier than to reason the case with God; tell me, man, here before the Lord, as if thou wert to die this hour, why shouldst thou not resolve to turn this day; before thou stir from the place thou standest in, what reason hast thou to deny or to delay? Hast thou any reason that satisfieth thine own conscience for it, or any that thou darest own and plead at the bar of God: if thou hast, let us hear them; bring them forth, and make them good. But alas, what poor stuff, what nonsense, instead of reasons, do we daily hear from ungodly men? But for their necessity, I should be ashamed to name them.

Objection 1. One saith, If none shall be saved, but such converted and sanctified ones as you talk of, then heaven would be but empty; then God help a great many.

Answer. Why, it seems you think that God doth not know, or else that he is not to be believed! Measure not all by yourselves: God hath thousands and millions of his sanctified ones; but yet there are few in comparison of the world, as Christ himself hath told us. It better beseems you to

make that use of this truth which Christ teacheth you, " Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." " Fear not, little flock (saith Christ to his sanctified ones), for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Objection 2. I am sure, if such as I go to hell, we shall have store of company.

Answer. And will that be any ease or comfort to you? Or do you think you may not have company enough in heaven? Will you be undone for company, or will you not believe that God will execute his threatenings, because there be so many that are guilty? All these are all unreasonable conceits.

Objection 3. But all men are sinners, even the best of you all.

Answer. But all are not unconverted sinners. The godly live not in gross sins, and their very infirmities are their grief and burden, which they daily long, and pray, and strive to be rid of. Sin hath not dominion over them.

Objection 4. I do not see that professors are any better than other men; they will over-reach and oppress, and are as covetous as any.

Answer. Whatever hypocrites are, it is not so with those that are sanctified. God hath thousands, or ten thousands, that are otherwise, though the malicious world doth accuse them of what they can never prove, and of that which never entered into

their hearts; and commonly they charge them with heart-sins, which none can see but God, because they can charge them with no such wickedness in their lives as they are guilty of themselves.

Objection 5. But I am no whoremonger, nor drunkard, nor oppressor; and therefore, why should you call upon me to be converted?

Answer. As if you were not "born after the flesh," and had not lived after the flesh, as well as others! Is it not as great a sin as any of these, for a man to have an earthly mind, and to love the world above God, and to have an unbelieving, unhumbled heart? Nay, let me tell you more, that many persons that avoid disgraceful sins are as fast glued to the world, and as much slaves to the flesh, and as strange to God and averse to heaven, in their more civil course, as others are in their more shameful notorious sins.

Objection 6. But I mean nobody any harm, nor do any harm; and why then should God condemn me?

Answer. Is it no harm to neglect the Lord that made thee, and the work for which thou camest into the world, and to prefer the creature before the Creator, and to neglect grace that is daily offered thee? It is the depth of thy sinfulness to be so insensible of it; the dead feel not that they are dead. If once thou wert made alive, thou wouldst see more amiss in thyself, and marvel at thyself for making so light of it.

Objection 7. I think you would make men mad, under pretence of converting them; it is enough to rack the brains of sinful people to muse so much on matters so high for them.

Answer 1. Can you be more mad than you are already, or, at least, can there be a more dangerous madness than to neglect your everlasting welfare, and wilfully undo yourselves?

2. A man is never so well in his wits till he be converted; he never knows God, nor knows sin, nor knows Christ, nor knows the world, nor himself, nor what his business is on earth, so as to set himself about it, till he be converted. The Scripture saith, that the wicked are "unreasonable men," and "that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God." It is said of the prodigal, "that when he came to himself," he resolved to return. It is a wise world when men will disobey God, and run to hell for fear of being out of their wits.

3. What is there in the work that Christ calls you to, that should drive a man out of his wits? Is it the loving of God, and calling upon him, and comfortably thinking of the glory to come, and the forsaking of our sins, and loving one another, and delighting ourselves in the service of God? Are these such things as should make men mad?

4. And whereas you say that these matters are too high for us; you accuse God himself for making this our work, and giving us his word, and commanding all that will be blessed to "meditate on it day and night." Are the matters which we are made for, and which we live for, too high for us to meddle with? This is plainly to unman us, and to make beasts of us, as if we were like them that must meddle with no higher matters than what belongs to flesh and earth. If heaven be too high for you to think on and provide for, it will be too high for you ever to possess.

5. If God should sometimes suffer any weak-headed persons to be distracted by thinking of eternal things, this is because they misunderstand them, and run without a guide; and of the two, I had rather be in the case of such a one, than of the mad, unconverted world, that take their distraction to be their wisdom.

Objection 8. I do not think that God cares so much what men think, or speak, or do, as to make so great a matter of it.

Answer. It seems, then, you take the word of God to be false, and then what will you believe? But your own reason might teach you better, if you believe not the Scriptures, for you see God sets not so light by us; but that he vouchsafed to make us, and still preserveth us, and daily upholdeth us, and provideth for us; and will any wise man make a curious frame for nothing? Will you make or buy a clock or watch, and daily look to it, and not care whether it go true or false? Surely, if you believe not a particular eye of providence observing your hearts and lives, you cannot believe or expect any particular providence to observe your wants and troubles, or to relieve you; and if God had so little care for you as you imagine, you would never have lived till now—an hundred diseases would have striven which should first destroy you; yea, the devils would have haunted you, and fetched you away alive, as the great fishes devour the less, and as ravenous beasts and birds devour others. You cannot think that God made man for no end or use; and if he made him for any, it was sure for himself: and can you think he cares not whether his end be

accomplished, and whether we do the worst that we are made for?

Yea, by this atheistical objection, you make God to have made and upheld all the world in vain: for what are all other lower creatures for, but for man? What! doth the earth but bear us, and nourish us, and the beasts do serve us with their labours and lives, and so of the rest? And hath God made so glorious an habitation, and set man to dwell in it, and made all his servants; and now doth he look for nothing at his hands, nor care how he thinks, or speaks, or lives? This is most unreasonable.

Objection 9. It was a better world when men did not make so much ado in religion.

Answer 1. It hath ever been the custom to praise the times past; that world that you speak of was wont to say it was a better world in their forefathers' days, and so did they of their forefathers. This is but an old custom, because we all feel the evil of our own times, but we see not that which was before us.

2. Perhaps you speak as you think. Worldlings think the world is at the best when it is agreeable to their minds, and when they have most mirth and worldly pleasure; and I doubt not but the devil, as well as you, would say, that then it was a better world; for then he had more service, and less disturbance. But the world is at the best when God is most loved, regarded, and obeyed; and how else will you know when the world is good or bad, but by this?

Objection 10. There are so many ways and religions, that we know not which to be of, and therefore we will be even as we are.

Answer. Because there are many, will you be of

that way that you may be sure is wrong? None are further out of the way than worldly, fleshly, unconverted sinners; for they do not only err in this or that opinion, as many sects do, but in the very scope and drift of their lives. If you were going a journey that your life lay on, would you stop or turn again, because you meet with some cross-ways, or because you saw some travellers go the horse-way, and some the foot-way, and some perhaps break over the hedge, yea, and some miss the way? or would you not rather but be the more careful to inquire the way? If you have some servants that know not how to do your work right, and some that are unfaithful, would you take it well at any of the rest that would therefore be idle, and do you no service, because they see the rest so bad?

Objection 11. I do not see that it goes any better with those that are so godly, than with other men. They are as poor, and in as much trouble as others.

Answer. And perhaps in much more, when God sees it meet. They take not earthly prosperity for their wages; they have laid up their treasure and hopes in another world; or else they are not Christians indeed; the less they have, the more is behind, and they are content to wait till then.

Objection 12. When you have said all that you can, I am resolved to hope well, and trust in God, and do as well as I can, and not make so much ado.

Answer 1. Is that doing as well as you can, when you will not turn to God, but your heart is against his holy and diligent service? It is as well as you will, indeed, but that is your misery.

2. My desire is, that you should hope and trust in God. But for what is it that you will hope? Is

it to be saved, if you turn and be sanctified? For this you have God's promise; and therefore, hope for it, and spare not: but, if you hope to be saved without conversion and a holy life, this is not to hope in God, but in Satan, or yourselves; for God hath given you no such promise, but told you the contrary; but it is Satan and self-love that made you such promises, and raised you to such hopes.

Well, if these, and such as these, be all you have to say against conversion and a holy life, your all is nothing, and worse than nothing; and if these, and such as these, seem reasons sufficient to persuade you to forsake God, and cast yourselves into hell, the Lord deliver you from such reasons, and from such blind understandings, and from such senseless, hardened hearts. Dare you stand to every one of these reasons at the bar of God? Do you think it will then serve your turn, to say, 'Lord, I did not turn, because I had so much to do in the world, or because I did not like the lives of some professors, or because I saw men of so many minds.' O, how easily will the light of that day confound and shame such reasonings as these! Had you the world to look after? Let the world which you served now pay you your wages, and save you if it can. Had you not a better world to look after first, and were ye not commanded to "seek first God's kingdom and righteousness," and promised that "other things should be added to you?" And were ye not told, "that godliness was profitable to all things, having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come?" Did the sins of professors hinder you? You should rather have been the

more heedful, and learned, by their falls, to beware, and have been the more careful, and not to be more careless; it was the Scripture, and not their lives, that was your rule. Did the many opinions of the world hinder you? Why, the Scripture, that was your rule, did teach you but one way, and that was the right way. If you had followed that even in so much as was plain and easy, you should never have miscarried. Will not such answers as these confound and silence you? If these will not, God hath those that will. When he asked the man, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding-garment?" that is, what dost thou in my Church, among professed Christians, without a holy heart and life,—what answer did he make? Why, the text saith, "he was speechless," he had nothing to say. The clearness of the case, and the majesty of God, will then easily stop the mouths of the most confident of you, though you will not be put down by any thing we can say to you now, but will make good your cause, be it ever so bad. I know already that never a reason that now you can give me will do you any good at last, when your case must be opened before the Lord, and all the world.

Nay, I scarce think that your own consciences are well satisfied with your reasons; for if they are, it seems, then, you have not so much as a purpose to repent. But if you do purpose to repent, it seems you do not put much confidence in your reasons which you bring against it.

What say you, unconverted sinners? Have you any good reasons to give why you should not turn, and presently turn with all your hearts? Or will you

go to hell in despite of reason itself? Bethink you what you do in time, for it will shortly be too late to bethink you. Can you find any fault with God, or his work, or his wages? Is he a bad master? Is the devil, whom you serve, a better? or is the flesh a better? Is there any harm in a holy life? Is a life of worldliness and ungodliness better? Do you think in your consciences that it would do you any harm to be converted and live a holy life? What harm can it do you? Is it harm to you to have the Spirit of Christ within you, and to have a cleansed, purified heart? If it be bad to be holy, why doth God say, "Be ye holy, for I am holy?" Is it evil to be like God? Is it not said, that "God made man in his image?" Why, this holiness is his image: this, Adam lost; and this, Christ, by his word and Spirit, would restore to you, as he doth to all that he will have. Why were you "baptized into the Holy Ghost," and why do you baptize your children into the Holy Ghost, as your Sanctifier, if you will not be sanctified by him, but think it a hurt to you to be sanctified? Tell me truly, as before the Lord, though you are loath to live a holy life, had you not rather die in the case of those that do so, than of others? If you were to die this day, had you not rather die in the case of a converted man than of an unconverted? of a holy and heavenly man, than of a carnal, earthly man? and would you not say, as Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?" And why will you not now be of the mind that you will be of then? first or last you must come to this, either to be converted, or to wish you had been, when it is too late.

But what is it that you are afraid of losing if you turn? Is it your friends; you will but change them, God will be your friend, and Christ and the Spirit will be your friend, and every Christian will be your friend. You will get one friends that will stand you in more stead than all the friends in the world could have done. The friends you lose would have but enticed you to hell, but could not have delivered you; but the friend you get will save you from hell, and bring you to his own eternal rest.

Is it your pleasures that you are afraid of losing? You think you shall never have a merry day again if once you be converted. Alas, that you should think it a greater pleasure to live in foolish sports and merriments, and please your flesh, than live in the believing thoughts of glory, and in the love of God, and in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," in which the state of grace consisteth. If it be a greater pleasure for you to think of your lands and inheritance, if you were lord of all the country, than it is for a child to play at pins; why should it not be a greater joy to you to think of the kingdom of heaven being yours, than of all the riches or pleasures of the world? As it is but foolish childishness that makes children so delight in baubles, that they would not leave them for all your lands, so it is but foolish worldliness, and fleshliness, and wickedness, that makes you so much delight in your houses and lands, and meat, and drink, and ease, and honour, as that you would not part with them for the heavenly delights. But what will you do for pleasure when these are gone? Do you not think of that? When your pleasures end in

horror, and go out like a taper, the pleasures of the saints are then at the best. I have had myself but a little taste of the heavenly pleasures in the forethoughts of the blessed approaching day, and in the present persuasions of the love of God in Christ; but I have taken too a deep draught of earthly pleasures: so that you may see, if I be partial, it is on your side. And yet I must profess from that little experience, that there is no comparison: there is more joy to be had in a day (if the sun of life shine clear upon us) in the state of holiness, than in a whole life of sinful pleasures. I had "rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." "A day in his courts is better than a thousand any where else." The mirth of the wicked is like the laughter of a madman that knows not his own misery; and therefore Solomon saith of such laughter, "It is mad; and of mirth, what doth it?" "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to bear the rebuke of the wise, than to hear the song of fools; for as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool." All the pleasure of fleshly things is but like the scratching of a man that hath the itch; it is his disease that makes him desire it, and a wise man had rather be without his pleasure than be troubled with his itch. Your loudest laughter is but

like that of a man that is tickled; he laughs when he has no cause of joy, and it is a wiser thing for a man to give all his estate, and his life, to be tickled to make him laugh, than for you to part with the love of God, and the comforts of holiness, and the hopes of heaven, and to cast yourselves into damnation, that you may have your flesh tickled with the pleasure of sin for a little while. Judge as you are men, whether this be a wise man's part. It is but your carnal unsanctified nature that makes a holy life seem grievous to you, and a course of sensuality seem more delightful; if you will but turn, the Holy Ghost will give you another nature and inclination, and then it will be more pleasant to you to be rid of your sin, than now it is to keep it; and you will then say, that you knew not what a comfortable life was till now, and that it was never well with you, till God and holiness were your delight.

Question. But how cometh it to pass that men should be so unreasonable in the matters of salvation? They have wit enough in other matters, what makes them so loath to be converted, that there should need so many words in so plain a case, and all will not do, but the most will live and die unconverted?

Answer. To name them only in a few words, the causes are these:—

1. Men are naturally in love with the earth and flesh, they are born sinners, and their nature hath an enmity to God and goodness, as the nature of a serpent hath to a man; and when all that we can say goes against an habitual inclination of their natures, no marvel if it little prevail.

2. They are in darkness, and know not the very

things they hear. Like a man that was born blind, and hears a high commendation of the light; but what will hearing do, unless he sees it: they know not what God is, nor what is the power of the cross of Christ, nor what the spirit of holiness is, nor what it is to live in love by faith. They know not the certainty, and suitableness, and excellency of the heavenly inheritance. They know not what conversion, and a holy mind and conversation is, even when they hear of it. They are in a mist of ignorance. They are lost and bewildered in sin; like a man that has lost himself in the night, and knows not where he is, nor how to come to himself again, till the daylight recover him.

3. They are wilfully confident that they need no conversion, but some partial amendment; and that they are in the way to heaven already; and are converted when they are not. And if you meet a man that is quite out of his way, you may long enough call on him to turn back again, if he will not believe you that he is out of the way.

4. They are become slaves to their flesh, and drowned in the world to make provision for it. Their lusts, and passions, and appetites have distracted them, and got such a hand over them, that they cannot tell how to deny them, or how to mind any thing else; so that the drunkard saith, "I love a cup of good drink, and I cannot forbear it." The glutton saith, "I love good cheer, and I cannot forbear." The fornicator saith, "I love to have my lust fulfilled, and I cannot forbear." And the gamester loves to have his sports, and he cannot forbear. So that they are become even captivated slaves to

their flesh, and their very wilfulness is become an impotency; and what they would not do, they say they cannot. And the worldling is so taken up with earthly things, that he hath neither heart nor mind, nor time for heavenly; but as, in Pharaoh's dream, the lean kine did eat up the fat ones; so this lean and barren earth doth eat up all the thoughts of heaven.

5. Some are so carried away by the stream of evil company, that they are possessed with hard thoughts of a godly life, by hearing them speak against it; or at least they think they may venture to do as they see most do, and so they hold on in their sinful ways: and when one is cut off, and cast into hell, and another snatched away from among them to the same condemnation, it doth not much daunt them, because they see not whither they are gone. Poor wretches, they hold on in their ungodliness, for all this; for they little know that their companions are now lamenting it in torments. In Luke xvi. the rich man in hell would fain have had one to warn his five brethren, lest they should come to that place of torment. It is like he knew their minds and lives, and knew that they were hasting thither, and little dreamed that he was there, yea, and would little have believed one that should have told them so. I remember a passage that a gentleman, yet living, told me he saw upon a bridge over the Severn.* A man was driving a flock of fat lambs, and something meeting them, and hindering their passage, one of the lambs leapt upon the wall of the bridge, and his legs slip-

* Mr. R. Rowly, of Shrewsbury, upon Acham-Bridge.

ping from under him, he fell into the stream; the rest seeing him, did, one after one, leap over the bridge into the stream, and were all or almost all drowned: those that were behind did little know what was become of them that were gone before; but thought they might venture to follow their companions; but as soon as ever they were over the wall, and falling headlong, the case was altered. Even so it is with unconverted carnal men. One dieth by them, and drops into hell, and another follows the same way; and yet they will go after them, because they think not whither they are gone. O, but when death hath once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall; even in another world, then what would they give to be where they were!

6. Moreover, they have a subtile malicious enemy, that is unseen of them, and plays his game in the dark; whose principal business it is to hinder their conversion; and therefore to keep them where they are, by persuading them not to believe the Scriptures, or not to trouble their minds with these matters: or by persuading them to think ill of a godly life, or to think that it is more ado than needs, and that they may be saved without conversion, and without all this stir; and that God is so merciful, that he will not damn any such as they; or at least, that they may stay a little longer, and take their pleasure, and follow the world a little longer yet, and then let it go, and repent hereafter. And by such juggling, deluding cheats as these, the devil keeps the most in his captivity, and leadeth them to his misery.

These, and such like impediments as these, do keep so many thousands unconverted, when God hath done so much, and Christ hath suffered so much, and ministers have said so much for their conversion; when their reasons are silenced, and they are not able to answer the Lord that calls after them, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" All comes to nothing with the greatest part of them; and they leave us no more to do after all, but to sit down and lament their wilful misery.

I have now shown you the reasonableness of God's commands, and the unreasonableness of wicked men's disobedience. If nothing will serve the turn, but men will yet refuse to turn, we are next to consider who is in fault, if they be damned. And this brings me to the last doctrine; which is,

DOCTRINE 7. *That, if after all this men will not turn, it is not the fault of God that they are condemned, but of themselves, even their own wilfulness. They die because they will, that is because they will not turn.*

If you will go to hell, what remedy? God here acquits himself of your blood; it shall not lie on him if you be lost. A negligent minister may draw it upon him; and those that encourage you, or hinder you not in sin, may draw it upon them: but be sure of it, it shall not lie upon God. Saith the Lord concerning his unprofitable vineyard, "Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard, what could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" When he had planted it in a

fruitful soil, and fenced it, and gathered out the stones, and planted it with the choicest vines, what should he have done more to it? He hath made you men, and endowed you with reason; he hath furnished you with all external necessaries, all creatures are at your service; he hath given you a righteous perfect law. When you had broken it, and undone yourselves, he had pity on you, and sent his Son by a miracle of condescending mercy to die for you, and be a sacrifice for your sins, and he "was in Christ reconciling the world to himself."

The Lord Jesus hath made you a deed of gift of himself, and eternal life with him, on the condition you will but accept it, and return. He hath on this reasonable condition offered you the free pardon of all your sins; he hath written this in his word, and sealed it by his Spirit, and sent it you by his ministers: they have made the offer to you an hundred and an hundred times, and called you to accept it, and to turn to God. They have in his name entreated you, and reasoned the case with you, and answered all your frivolous objections. He hath long waited on you, and staid your leisure, and suffered you to abuse him to his face. He hath mercifully sustained you in the midst of your sins; he hath compassed you about with all sorts of mercies; he hath also intermixed afflictions, to remind you of your folly, and call you to your wits, and his Spirit has been often striving with your hearts, and saying there, 'Turn sinner, turn to him that calleth thee: Whither art thou going? What art thou doing? Dost thou know what will be the end? How long wilt thou hate thy friends, and love thine enemies?

When wilt thou let go all, and turn and deliver up thyself to God, and give thy Redeemer the possession of thy soul? When shall it once be?' These pleadings have been used with thee, and when thou hast delayed thou hast been urged to make haste, and God hath called to thee, 'To-day while it is called to-day, harden not thy heart: why not now, without any more delay?' Life hath been set before you; the joys of heaven have been opened to you in the gospel; the certainty of them hath been manifested; the certainty of the everlasting torments of the damned hath been declared to you: unless you would have had a sight of heaven and hell, what could you desire more? Christ hath been, as it were, set forth crucified before your eyes. You have been an hundred times told that you are but lost men till you come unto him; as oft you have been told of the evil of sin, of the vanity of sin, the world, and all the pleasures and wealth it can afford; of the shortness and uncertainty of your lives, and the endless duration of the joy or torment of the life to come. All this, and more than this have you been told, and told again, even till you were weary of hearing it, and till you could make the lighter of it, because you had so often heard it, like the smith's dog, that is brought by custom to sleep under the noise of the hammers, and when the sparks do fly about his ears; and though all this have not converted you, yet you are alive, and might have mercy to this day, if you had but hearts to entertain it. And now let reason itself be the judge, whether it be the fault of God or you, if after all this you will be unconverted and be damned. If you die

now, it is because you will die. What should be said more to you, or what course should be taken that is likelier to prevail? Are you able to say, and make it good, 'We would fain have been converted and become new creatures, but we could not; we would fain have forsaken our sins, but we could not; we would have changed our company and our thoughts, and our discourse, but we could not.' Why could you not, if you would? What hindered you but the wickedness of your hearts? Who forced you to sin, or who did hold you back from duty? Had not you the same teaching, and time, and liberty to be godly, as your godly neighbours had? Why then could not you have been godly as well as they? Was the church shut against you, or did you not keep away yourselves, or sit and sleep, or hear as if you did not hear? Did God put in any exceptions against you in his word, when he invited sinners to return; and when he promised mercy to those that do return? Did he say, 'I will pardon all that repent except thee?' Did he shut thee out from the liberty of his holy worship? Did he forbid you to pray to him any more than others? You know he did not. God did not drive you away from him, but you forsook him, and ran away yourselves, and when he called you to him, you would not come. If God had excepted you out of the general promise and offer of mercy, or had said to you, 'Stand off, I will have nothing to do with such as you; pray not to me, for I will not hear you; if you repent never so much, and cry for mercy never so much, I will not regard you.' If God had left you nothing to

trust to but desperation, then you had a fair excuse; you might have said, 'To what end do I repent and turn, when it will do no good?' But this was not your case, you might have had Christ to be your Lord and Saviour; your head and husband, as well as others, and you would not, because you felt yourselves not sick enough for the physician, and because you could not spare your disease; in your hearts you said as those rebels, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Christ would have gathered you under the wings of his salvation, and you would not. What desires of your welfare did the Lord express in his holy word! With what compassion did he stand over you, and say, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and that they had walked in my ways!" "O that there were such a heart in this people, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever!" "O that they were wise, that they understood this, and that they would consider their latter end!" He would have been your God, and done all for you that your souls could well desire: but you loved the world and your flesh above him, and therefore you would not hearken to him; though you complimented him, and gave him high titles, yet when it came to the closing, you "would have none of him." No marvel then if "he gave you up to your own hearts' lusts, and you walked in your own counsels." He condescends to reason, and pleads the case with you, and asks you, 'What is there in me, or my service, that you should be so much against me? What harm have I done thee, sinner? Have I deserved

this unkind dealing at thy hand? Many mercies have I shown thee: for which of them dost thou thus despise me? Is it I, or is it Satan that is thy enemy? Is it I, or is it thy carnal self that would undo thee? Is it a holy life, or a life of sin that thou hast cause to fly from? If thou be undone, thou procurest this to thyself, by forsaking me, the Lord that would have saved thee.' "Doth not thy own wickedness correct thee, and thy sin reprove thee; thou mayest see that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken me." "What iniquity have you found in me that you have followed after vanity, and forsaken me?" He calleth out, as it were, to the brutes, to hear the controversy he hath against you. "Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of Egypt, and redeemed thee," &c. "Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers!" "Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise? is he not thy Father that bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee." When he saw that you forsook him, even for nothing, and turned away from your Lord and life, to hunt after the chaff, and

feathers of the world, he told you of your folly, and called you to a more profitable employment. "Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline you ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." And when you would not hear, what complaints have you put him to, charging it on you as your wilfulness and stubbornness! "Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Many a time hath Christ proclaimed that free invitation to you, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But you put him to complain after all his offers, "They will not come to me that they may have life." He hath invited you to feast with him in the kingdom of his grace, and you have had excuses from your grounds, and your cattle, and your worldly business, and when you would not come, you have said you could not; and provoked him to resolve that you should never "taste of his supper." And

who is it the fault of now but yourselves? and what can you say is the chief cause of your damnation, but your own wills? you would be damned. The whole case is laid open by Christ himself, Prov. i. from the 20th to the end. "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she crieth in the chief place of the concourse, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorner delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hands, and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsels, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsels: they despised all my reproof: therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth to me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil."—I thought best to recite the whole text at large to you, because it doth so fully show the cause of the destruction of the wicked. It is not because God would not teach them, but because they would not learn. It is not

because God would not call them, but because they would not turn at his reproof. Their wilfulness is their undoing.

USE.

From what has been said, you may further learn these following things:—

1. From hence you may see, not only what blasphemy and impiety it is to lay the blame of men's destruction upon God, but also how unfit these wicked wretches are to bring in such a charge against their Maker. They cry out upon God, and say he gives them not grace, and his threatenings are severe, and God forbid that all should be damned that are not converted and sanctified; and they think it a hard measure that a short sin should have an endless suffering; and if they be damned, they say they cannot help it, when, in the mean time, they are busy about their own destruction, even of their own souls, and will not be persuaded to hold their hands. They think God were cruel, if he should damn them; and yet they are so cruel to themselves, that they will run into the fire of hell, when God hath told them it is a little before them, and neither entreaties, nor threatenings, nor any thing that can be said, will stop them. We see them almost undone; their careless, worldly, fleshly lives, do tell us that they are in the power of the devil; we know, if they die before they are converted, all the world cannot save them, and, knowing the uncertainty of their lives, we are afraid every day lest they drop into the fire; and therefore we entreat them to pity their own

souls, and not to undo themselves when mercy is at hand, and they will not hear us. We entreat them to cast away their sins, and come to Christ without delay, and to have some mercy on themselves; but they will have none: and yet they think that God must be cruel if he condemn them. O wilful wretched sinners! It is not God that is cruel to you; it is you that are cruel to yourselves. You are told you must *turn* or *burn*, and yet you *turn not*. You are told that, if you will needs keep your sins, you shall keep the curse of God with them; and yet you will keep them. You are told that there is no way to happiness but by holiness; and yet you will not be holy. What would you have God to say more to you? What would you have him do with his mercy? He offereth it you, and you will not have it. You are in the ditch of sin and misery, and he would give you his hand to help you out, and you refuse his help; he would cleanse you of your sins; and you would rather keep them: you love your lust, and love your gluttony, and sports, and drunkenness, and will not let them go; would you have him bring you to heaven whether you will or not? Or would you have him bring you and your sins to heaven together? Why, that is an impossibility; you may as well expect he should turn the sun into darkness. What! an unsanctified fleshly heart be in heaven? It cannot be: "There entereth nothing that is unclean." "For what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?" "All the day long hath he stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." What will you do now? Will you cry to God for mercy? Why, God calleth

upon you to have mercy upon yourselves, and you will not. Ministers see the poisoned cup in the drunkard's hand, and tell him there is poison in it, and desire him to have mercy on his soul, and forbear, and he will not hear us; drink it he must and will; he loves it, and therefore, though hell comes next, he saith he cannot help it. What should one say to such men as these? We tell the ungodly careless worldling, 'It is not such a life that will serve the turn, or ever bring you to heaven. If a bear were at your back, you would mend your pace; and when the curse of God is at your back, and Satan and hell are at your back, will you not stir, but ask, What needs all this ado? Is an immortal soul of no more worth? O have mercy upon yourselves!' But they will have no mercy on themselves, nor once regard us. We tell them the end will be bitter: who can dwell with the everlasting fire? And yet they will have no mercy on themselves. And yet will these shameless wretches say, that God is more merciful than to condemn them; when it is themselves that cruelly and unmercifully run upon condemnation: and if we should go to them with our hats in our hands, and entreat them, we cannot stop them; if we should fall on our knees to them, we cannot stop them, but to hell they will go, and yet will they not believe that they are going thither. If we beg of them for the sake of God that made them, and preserveth them; for the sake of Christ that died for them; for the sake of their own poor souls, to pity themselves, and go no further in the way to hell, but come to Christ while his arms are open, and enter into the state of life while the door stands open, and now take mercy

while mercy may be had; they will not be persuaded. If we should die for it, we cannot get them so much as now and then to think of the matter, and to turn; and yet they can say, I hope God will be merciful. Did you never consider what he saith? "It is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will show them no favour." If another man will not clothe you when you are naked, and feed you when you are hungry, you will say he is unmerciful. If he should cast you into prison, or beat and torment you, you would say he is unmerciful. And yet you will do a thousand times more against yourselves, even cast away both soul and body for ever, and never complain of your own unmercifulness: yea, and God that waited upon you all the while with his mercy, must be taken to be unmerciful, if he punish you after all this. Unless the holy God of heaven will give these wretches leave to trample upon his Son's blood, and with the Jews, as it were, again to spit in his face, and do despite to the Spirit of Grace, and make a jest of sin, and a mock at holiness, and set more light by saving mercy, than by the filth of their fleshly pleasures; and unless, after all this, he will save them by the mercy which they cast away, and would have none of, God himself must be called unmerciful by them. But he will be justified when he judgeth, and he will not stand or fall at the bar of a sinful worm.

I know there are many particular cavils that are brought by them against the Lord, but I shall not here stay to answer them particularly, having done

it already in my " Treatise of Judgment," to which I shall refer them. Had the disputing part of the world been as careful to avoid sin and destruction, as they have been busy in searching after the cause of them, and forward indirectly to impute it to God, they might have exercised their wits more profitably, and have less wronged God, and sped better themselves. When so ugly a monster as sin is within us, and so heavy a thing as punishment is on us, and so dreadful a thing as hell is before us, one would think it should be an easy question, who is in the fault, whether God or man be the principal or culpable cause? Some men are such favourable judges of themselves, that they are proner to accuse the infinite perfection and goodness itself, than their own hearts, and imitate their first parents, who said, " The serpent tempted me, and the woman that thou gavest me, gave unto me, and I did eat;" secretly implying, that God was the cause. So say they, " The understanding that thou gavest me was unable to discern; the will that thou gavest me was unable to make a better choice; the objects which thou didst set before me, did entice me; the temptations which thou didst permit to assault me, prevailed against me." And some are so loath to think that God can make a self-determining creature, that they dare not deny him that which they take to be his prerogative,—to be the determiner of the will in every sin, as the first efficient immediate physical cause; and many could be content to acquit God from so much causing of evil, if they could but reconcile it with his being the chief cause of good; as if truths

would be no longer truths than we are able to see them in their perfect order and coherence: because our ravelled wits cannot see them right together, nor assign each truth its proper place, we presume to conclude that some must be cast away. This is the fruit of proud self-conceitedness, when men receive not God's truth as a child his lesson, in a holy submission to the omniscience of our Teacher, but as censurers that are too wise to learn.

Objection. But we cannot convert ourselves till God convert us; we can do nothing without his grace; it is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that showeth mercy.

Answer 1. God hath two degrees of mercy to show: the mercy of conversion first, and the mercy of salvation last. The latter he will give to none but those that will and run, and hath promised it to them only: the former is to make them willing that were unwilling; and though your own willing and endeavours deserve not his grace, yet your wilful refusal deserveth that it should be denied to you. Your disability is your very unwillingness itself, which excuseth not your sin, but maketh it the greater. You could turn if you were but truly willing; and if your wills themselves are so corrupted that nothing but effectual grace will move them, you have the more cause to seek for that grace, and yield to it, and do what you can in the use of means, and not neglect it, and set against it. Do what you are able first, and then complain of God for denying you grace if you have cause.

Objection. But you seem to intimate all this while that man hath free-will.

Answer. The dispute about free-will is beyond your capacity; I shall, therefore, now trouble you with no more but this about it. Your will is naturally a free, that is, a self-determining faculty, but it is viciously inclined, and backward to do good; and therefore, we see, by sad experience, that it hath not a virtuous, moral freedom; but that it is the wickedness of it which deserveth the punishment: and, I pray you, let us not befool ourselves with opinions. Let the case be your own. If you had an enemy that was so malicious that he falls upon you, and beats you every time he meets you, and takes away the lives of your children, will you excuse him, because he saith, I have not free-will, it is my nature; I cannot choose, unless God give me grace? If you have a servant that robbeth you, will you take such an answer from him? Might not every thief and murderer that is hanged at the assize give such an answer—I have not free-will; I cannot change my own heart; what can I do without God's grace? and shall they therefore be acquitted? If not, why then should you think to be acquitted for a course of sin against the Lord?

2. From hence, also, you may observe these three things together: 1st, What a subtle tempter Satan is. 2d, What a deceitful thing sin is. 3d, What a foolish creature corrupted man is. A subtle tempter indeed, that can persuade the greatest part of the world to go into everlasting fire, when they have so many warnings and dissuasives as they have! A deceitful thing is sin indeed, that can bewitch so many thousands to part with everlasting life, for a thing so base and utterly unworthy! A foolish

creature is man indeed, that will be cheated of his salvation for nothing, yea, for a known nothing, and that by an enemy, and a known enemy! You would think it impossible that any man in his wits should be persuaded for a little to cast himself into the fire, or water, or into a coal-pit, to the destruction of his life, and yet men will be enticed to cast themselves into hell. If your natural lives were in your own hands, that you should not die till you would kill yourselves, how long would most of you live? And yet, when your everlasting life is so far in your own hands, under God, that you cannot be undone till you undo yourselves, how few of you will forbear your own undoing! Ah, what a silly thing is man! and what a bewitching and befooling thing is sin!

3. From hence, also, you may learn, that it is no great wonder if wicked men be hinderers of others in the way to heaven, and would have as many unconverted as they can, and would draw them into sin, and would keep them in it. Can you expect that they should have mercy on others, that have none upon themselves? and that they should hesitate much at the destruction of others, that hesitate not to destroy themselves? They do no worse by others than they do by themselves.

4. Lastly, you may hence learn, that the greatest enemy to man is himself; and the greatest judgment in this life, that can befall him, is to be left to himself; that the great work that grace hath to do, is to save us from ourselves; that the greatest accusations and complaints of men should be against themselves; and that the greatest work that we have to do ourselves, is to resist ourselves; that the great-

est enemy, that we should daily pray, and watch, and strive against, is our own carnal hearts and wills; and the greatest part of your work, if you would do good to others, and help them to heaven, is to save them from themselves, even from their blind understandings, and corrupt wills, and perverse affections, and violent passions, and unruly senses. I only name all these for brevity sake, and leave them to your further consideration.

Well, sirs, now we have found out the great delinquent and murderer of souls (even men's selves, their own wills,) what remains but that you judge according to the evidence, and confess this great iniquity before the Lord, and be humbled for it, and do so no more? To these three ends, distinctly, I shall add a few words more. 1. Further to convince you. 2. To humble you. And 3. To reform you, if there yet be any hope.

1. We know so much of the exceeding gracious nature of God, who is willing to do good, and delighteth to show mercy, that we have no reason to suspect him of being the culpable cause of our death, or to call him cruel; he made all good, and he preserveth and maintaineth all; "the eyes of all things do wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season; he openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desires of all the living." He is not only "righteous in all his ways," and therefore will deal justly, "and holy in all his works," and therefore not the author of sin, but "he is also good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works."

But as for man, we know his mind is dark, his will perverse, and his affections carry him so head-

long, that he is fitted, by his folly and corruption, to such a work as the destroying of himself. If you saw a lamb lie killed in the way, would you sooner suspect the sheep, or the dog, or wolf, to be the author of it, if they both stand by? Or, if you see a house broken, and the people murdered, would you sooner suspect the prince or judge, that is wise and just, and had no need, or a known thief or murderer? I say, therefore, "Let no man say, when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man (to draw him into sin), but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." You see here that sin is the offspring of your own concupiscence, and not to be fathered on God, and that death is the offspring of your own sin, and the fruit which it will yield you as soon as it is ripe. You have a treasure of evil in yourselves, as a spider hath of poison, from whence you are bringing forth hurt to yourselves, and spinning such webs as entangle your own souls. Your nature shows it is you that are the cause.

2. It is evident that you are your own destroyers, in that you are so ready to entertain any temptation almost that is offered you. Satan is scarcely more ready to move you to any evil, than you are ready to hear, and to do as he would have you. If he would tempt your understanding to error and prejudice, you yield. If he would hinder you from good resolutions, it is soon done. If he would cool any good desires or affections, it is soon done. If he

would kindle any lust, or vile affections and desires, in you, it is soon done. If he will put you on to evil thoughts or deeds, you are so free, that he needs no rod or spur. If he would keep you from holy thoughts, and words, and ways, a little doth it, you need no curb. You examine not his suggestions, nor resist them with any resolution, nor cast them out as he casts them in, nor quench the sparks which he endeavoureth to kindle; but you set in with him, and meet him half way, and embrace his motions, and tempt him to tempt you. And it is easy to catch such greedy fish that are ranging for a bait, and will take the bare hook.

3. Your destruction is evidently the fault of yourselves, in that you resist all that would help to save you, and would do you good, or hinder you from undoing yourselves. God would help and save you by his word, and you resist it, it is too strict for you. He would sanctify you by his Spirit, and you resist and quench it. If any man reprove you for your sin, you fly in his face with evil words; and if he would draw you to a holy life, and tell you of your present danger, you give him little thanks, but either bid him look to himself, he shall not answer for you, or else, at best, you put him off with a heartless thanks, and will not turn when you are persuaded. If ministers would privately instruct and help you, you will not come to them; your unhumbled souls feel but little need of their help; if they would catechise you, you are too old to be catechised, though you are not too old to be ignorant and unholy. Whatever they can say to you for your good, you are so self-conceited

and wise in your own eyes, even in the depth of ignorance, that you will regard nothing that agreeth not with your present conceits, but contradict your teachers, as if you were wiser than they; you resist all that they can say to you by your ignorance, and wilfulness, and foolish cavils, and shifting evasions, and unthankful rejections, so that no good that is offered can find any welcome acceptance and entertainment with you.

4. Moreover, it is apparent that you are self-destroyers, in that you draw the matter of your sin and destruction even from the blessed God himself. You like not the contrivances of his wisdom; you like not his justice, but take it for cruelty: you like not his holiness, but are ready to think "he is such a one as yourselves," and makes as light of sin as you; you like not his truth, but would have his threatenings, even his peremptory threatenings, prove false. And his goodness, which you seem most highly to approve, you partly resist, as it would lead you to repentance, and partly abuse, to the strengthening of your sin, as if you might sin more freely, because God is merciful, and because his grace doth so much abound.

5. Yea you fetch destruction from the blessed Redeemer, and death from the Lord of life himself. And nothing more emboldeneth you in sin, than that Christ hath died for you; as if now the danger of death were over, and you might boldly venture; as if Christ were become a servant of Satan and your sins, and must wait upon you while you are abusing him; and because he is become the physician of souls, and is able to save to the utmost all that come

to God by him. You think he must suffer you to refuse his help and throw away his medicines, and must save you whether you will come to God by him or not; so that a great part of your sins are occasioned by your bold presumption upon the death of Christ.

Not considering that he came to redeem his people from their sins, and to sanctify them a peculiar people to himself, and to conform them in holiness to the image of their heavenly Father, and to their head, Matt. i. 21. Tit. ii. 14. 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. Col. iii. 10, 11. Phil. iii. 9, 10.

6. You also fetch your own destruction from all the providences and works of God. When you think of his eternal fore-knowledge and decrees, it is to harden you in your sin, or possess your minds in quarrelling thoughts, as if his decrees might spare you the labour of repentance and a holy life, or else were the cause of sin and death. If he afflict you, you repine; if he prosper you, you the more forget him, and are the more backward to the thoughts of the life to come. If the wicked prosper, you forget the end that will set all reckonings straight; and are ready to think, it is as good to be wicked as godly. And thus you draw your death from all.

7. And the like you do from all the creatures and mercies of God to you. He giveth them to you as the tokens of his love and furniture for his service, and you turn them against him, to the pleasing of your flesh. You eat and drink to please your appetite, and not for the glory of God, and to enable you for his work. Your clothes you abuse to

pride. Your riches draw your hearts from heaven. Your honours and applause puff you up: if you have health and strength, it makes you more secure, and forget your end. Yea, other men's mercies are abused by you to your hurt. If you see their honours and dignity, you are provoked to envy them. If you see their riches, you are ready to covet them. If you look upon beauty, you are stirred up to lust. And it is well, if godliness be not an eye-sore to you.

8. The very gifts that God bestoweth on you, and the ordinances of grace which he hath instituted for his church, you turn to sin. If you have better parts than others, you grow proud and self-conceited: if you have but common gifts, you take them for special grace. You take the bare hearing of your duty for so good a work, as if it would excuse you for not obeying it. Your prayers are turned into sin, because you "regard iniquity in your hearts," and "depart not from iniquity when you call on the name of the Lord." Your "prayers are abominable, because you turn away your ear from hearing the law." And are more ready to offer the sacrifice of fools, (thinking you do God some special service,) than to hear his word and obey it. You examine not yourselves before you receive the supper of the Lord, "but not decerning the Lord's body, do eat and drink judgment to yourselves."

9. Yea, the persons that you converse with, and all their actions, you make the occasions of your sin and destruction. If they live in the fear of God, you hate them. If they live ungodly, you imitate them. If the wicked are many, you think you may

the more boldly follow them: if the godly be few, you are the more emboldened to despise them. If they walk exactly, you think they are too precise; if one of them fall in a particular temptation, you stumble upon them and turn away from holiness, because that others are imperfectly holy; as if you were warranted to break your necks, because some others have by their heedlessness strained a sinew, or put out a bone. If a hypocrite discover himself, you say, 'They are all alike,' and think yourselves as honest as the best. A professor can scarcely slip into any miscarriage, but because he cuts his finger, you think you may boldly cut your throats. If ministers deal plainly with you, you say they rail. If they speak gently, or coldly, you either sleep under them, or are little more affected than the seats you sit upon. If any errors creep into the church, some greedily entertain them, and others reproach the christian doctrine for them, which is most against them. And if we would draw you from any ancient rooted error, which can but plead two, or three, or six, or seven hundred years' custom, you are as much offended with a motion for reformation, as if you were to lose your life by it, and hold fast old errors, while you cry out against new ones. Scarce a difference can arise among the ministers of the gospel, but you will fetch your own death from it. And you will not hear, or at least not obey the unquestionable doctrine of any of those that jump not with your conceits. One will not hear a minister, because he saith the Lord's Prayer; and another will not hear him because he doth not use it. One will not hear them that are for episcopacy, and

another will not hear them that are against it. And thus I might show it you in many other cases, how you turn all that comes near you to your own destruction; so clear is it that the ungodly are self-destroyers, and that their perdition is of themselves.

Methinks now, upon the consideration of what is said, and the review of your own ways, you should bethink you what you have done, and be ashamed and deeply humbled to remember it. If you be not, I pray you consider these following truths:—

1. To be your own destroyers, is to sin against the deepest principle in your natures, even the principle of self-preservation. Every thing naturally desireth or inclineth to its own felicity, welfare, or perfection. And will you set yourselves to your own destruction? When you are commanded to love your neighbours as yourselves, it is supposed that you naturally love yourselves. But if you love your neighbours no better than yourselves, it seems you would have all the world be damned.

2. How extremely do you cross your own intentions! I know you intend not your own damnation, even when you are procuring it; you think you are but doing good to yourselves, by gratifying the desires of your flesh. But alas! it is but as a draught of cold water in a burning fever, or as the scratching of an itching wild-fire, which increaseth the disease and pain. If indeed you would have pleasure, profit, or honour, seek them where they are to be found, and do not hunt after them in the way to hell.

3. What pity it is that you should do that against yourselves, which none else in earth or hell can do! If all the world were combined against you, or all

the devils in hell were combined against you, they could not destroy you without yourselves, nor make you sin but by your own consent. And will you do that against yourselves which no one else can do? You have hateful thoughts of the devil, because he is your enemy, and endeavoureth your destruction. And will you be worse than devils to yourselves? Why thus it is with you, if you had hearts to understand it: when you run into sin, and run from godliness, and refuse to turn at the call of God, you do more against your own souls than men or devils could do besides; and if you should bend your wits to do yourselves the greatest mischief, you could not devise to do a greater.

4. You are false to the trust that God hath reposed in you. He hath much entrusted you with your own salvation, and will you betray your trust? He hath set you with all diligence to keep your hearts, and is this the keeping of them?

5. You do even forbid all others to pity you, when you will have no pity on yourselves. If you cry to God, in the day of your calamity, for mercy, mercy—what can you expect, but that he should thrust you away, and say, 'Nay, thou wouldst not have mercy on thyself: who brought this upon thee but thy own wilfulness?' And if your brethren see you everlastingly in misery, how shall they pity you that were your own destroyers, and would not be dissuaded?

6. It will everlastingly make you your own tormentors in hell, to think that you brought yourselves wilfully to that misery. O what a piercing thought it will be for ever to think with your-

selves, that this was your own doing! that you were warned of it this day, and warned again, but it would not do; that you wilfully sinned, and wilfully turned away from God; that you had time as well as others, but you abused it; you had teachers as well as others, but you refused their instruction; you had holy examples, but you did not imitate them; you were offered Christ, and grace, and glory, as well as others, but you had more mind of your fleshly pleasures; you had a price in your hands, but you had not a heart to lay it out. Can it choose but torment you to think of this your present folly? O that your eyes were opened to see what you have done in the wilful wronging of your own souls! and that you better understood these words of God. "Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain the favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death."

And now I am come to the conclusion of this work, my heart is troubled to think how I shall leave you, lest, after this the flesh should still deceive you, and the world and the devil should keep you asleep, and I should leave you as I found you, till you awake in hell. Though in care of your poor souls, I am afraid of this, as knowing the obstinacy of a carnal heart; yet I can say with the prophet Jeremiah, "I have not desired the woful day, the Lord knoweth." I have not with James and John desired that "fire might come from hea-

ven" to consume them that refused Jesus Christ. But it is the preventing of the eternal fire that I have been all this while endeavouring: and O that it had been a needless work! That God and conscience might have been as willing to spare me this labour, as some of you could have been.—Dear friends, I am so loath that you should lie in everlasting fire, and be shut out of heaven, if it be possible to prevent it, that I shall once more ask you, ' What do you now resolve; will you turn or die?' I look upon you as a physician on his patient, in a dangerous disease, that saith to him, ' Though you are far gone, take but this medicine, and forbear but those few things that are hurtful to you, and I dare warrant your life; but if you will not do this, you are but a dead man.' What would you think of such a man, if the physician, and all the friends he hath, cannot persuade him to take one medicine to save his life, or to forbear one or two poisonous things that would kill him? This is your case as far as you are gone in sin; do but now turn and come to Christ, and take his remedies, and your souls shall live. Cast up your deadly sins by repentance, and return not to the poisonous vomit any more, and you shall do well. But yet if it were your bodies that we had to deal with, we might partly know what to do for you. Though you would not consent, yet you might be held or bound while the medicine were poured down your throats, and hurtful things might be kept from you. But about your souls it cannot be so; we cannot convert you against your wills: there is no carrying madmen to heaven in fetters. You may be condemned against your wills, because

you sinned with your wills; but you cannot be saved against your wills. The wisdom of God hath thought meet to lay man's salvation or destruction exceedingly much upon the choice of their own will, that no man shall come to heaven that chose not the way to heaven; and no man shall come to hell, but shall be forced to say, 'I have the thing I chose, my own will did bring me hither.' Now, if I could but get you to be willing, to be thoroughly, and resolvedly, and habitually willing, the work were more than half done. And alas! must we lose our friends, and must they lose their God, their happiness, their souls, for want of this? O God forbid! It is a strange thing to me that men are so inhuman and stupid in the greatest matters, that in lesser things are civil and courteous, and good neighbours. For aught I know, I have the love of all, or almost all my neighbours, so far, that if I should send to any man in the town, or parish, or country, and request a reasonable courtesy of them, they would grant it me; and yet when I come to request of them the greatest matter in the world, for themselves, and not for me, I can have nothing of many of them but a patient hearing. I know not whether people think a man in the pulpit is in good earnest or not, and means as he speaks; for I think I have few neighbours, but, if I were sitting familiarly with them, and telling them of what I have seen or done, or known in the world, and what they themselves shall see and know in the world to come, they would believe me, and regard what I say; but when I tell them, from the infallible word of God, what they show by their lives, they do either not believe it,

or not much regard it. If I met any one of them on the way, and told them yonder is a coal-pit, or there is a quick-sand, or there are thieves lie in wait for you; I could persuade them to turn by. But when I tell them that Satan lieth in wait for them, and that sin is poison to them, and that hell is not a matter to be jested with; they go on as if they did not hear me. Truly, neighbours, I am in as good earnest with you in the pulpit, as I am in my familiar discourse; and if ever you will regard me, I beseech you let it be here. I think there is not a man of you all, but, if my own soul lay at your wills, you would be willing to save it, though I cannot promise that you would leave your sins for it. Tell me, thou drunkard, art thou so cruel to me that speak to thee, that thou wouldst not forbear a few cups of drink, if thou knewest it would save my soul from hell? Hadst thou rather that I did burn there for ever, than thou shouldst live soberly as other men do? If so, may I not say, thou art an unmerciful monster, and not a man? If I came hungry or naked to one of your doors, would you not part with more than a cup of drink to relieve me? I am confident you would: if it were to save my life, I know you would, some of you, hazard your own. And yet will you not be entreated to part with your sensual pleasures for your own salvation? Would you forbear an hundred cups of drink, to save my life, if it were in your power, and will you not do it to save your own souls? I profess to you, sirs, I am as hearty a beggar with you this day for the saving of your own souls, as I would be for my own supply, if I were forced to come in a-begging

to your doors. And, therefore, if you would hear me then, hear me now. If you would pity me then, be entreated now to pity yourselves. I do again beseech you, as if it were on my bended knees, that you would hearken to your Redeemer, and turn, that you may live. All you that have lived in ignorance, and carelessness, and presumption to this day; all you that have been drowned in the cares of the world, and have no mind of God, and eternal glory; all you that are enslaved to your fleshly desires, of meats and drinks, sports and lusts; and all you that know not the necessity of holiness, and never were acquainted with the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost upon your souls; that never embraced your blessed Redeemer by a lively faith, and with admiring and thankful apprehensions of his love, and that never felt a higher estimation of God and heaven, and a heartier love to them than to your fleshly prosperity, and the things below,—I earnestly beseech you, not only for my sake, but for the Lord's sake, and for your soul's sake, that you go not one day longer in your former condition, but look about you, and cry to God for converting grace, that you be made new creatures, and may escape the plagues that are a little before you. And if ever you will do any thing for me, grant me this request, to turn from your evil ways and live. Deny me any thing that ever I shall ask you for myself, if you will but grant me this. And if you deny me this, I care not for any thing else that you would grant me. Nay, as ever you will do any thing at the request of the Lord that made you and redeemed you, deny him not this; for if you deny him

this, he cares for nothing that you shall grant him. As ever you would have him hear your prayers, and grant your requests, and do for you at the hour of death and day of judgment, or in any of your extremities, deny not his request now in the day of your prosperity. O sirs, believe it, death and judgment, and heaven and hell, are other matters when you come near them, than they seem to carnal eyes afar off; then you would hear such a message as I bring you with more awakened regardful hearts.

Well, though I cannot hope so well of all, I will hope that some of you are by this time purposing to turn and live; and that you are ready to ask me, as the Jews did Peter, when they were pricked in their hearts, and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" How might we come to be truly converted? We are willing, if we did but know our duty. God forbid that we should choose destruction, by refusing conversion, as hitherto we have done.

If these be the thoughts and purposes of your hearts, I say of you as God did of a promising people, "They have well said all that they have spoken; O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always!" Your purposes are good: O that there were but a heart in you to perform these purposes! And in hope hereof I shall gladly give you direction what to do, and that but briefly, that you may the easier remember it for your practice.

Direction I.—If you would be converted and saved, labour to understand the necessity and true nature of conversion; for what, and from what, and of what, and by what it is that you must turn.

Consider what a lamentable condition you are in till the hour of your conversion, that you may see it is not a state to be rested in. You are under the guilt of all the sins that ever you committed, and under the wrath of God and the curse of his law; you are bond slaves to the devil, and daily employed in his work against the Lord, yourselves, and others; you are spiritually dead and deformed, as being devoid of the holy life, and nature, and image of the Lord. You are unfit for any holy work, and do nothing that is truly pleasing to God. You are without any promise or assurance of his protection, and live in continual danger of his justice, not knowing what hour you may be snatched away to hell, and most certain to be damned if you die in that condition; and nothing short of conversion can prevent it. Whatever civilities, or amendments, or ventures, are short of true conversion, will never procure the saving of your souls. Keep the true sense of this natural misery, and so of the necessity of conversion on your hearts.

And then you must understand what it is to be converted; it is to have a new heart or disposition, and a new conversation.

Question 1. For what must we turn?

Answer. For these ends following, which you may attain:—

1st, You shall immediately be made living members of Christ, and have interest in him, and be renewed after the image of God, and be adorned with all his graces, and quickened with a new and heavenly life, and saved from the tyranny of Satan, and the dominion of sin, and be justified from the curse

of the law, and have the pardon of all the sins of your whole lives, and be accepted of God, and made his sons, and have liberty with boldness to call him Father, and go to him by prayer in all your needs, with a promise of acceptance: you shall have the Holy Ghost to dwell in you, to sanctify and guide you: you shall have part in the brotherhood, communion, and prayers of the saints: you shall be fitted for God's service, and be freed from the dominion of sin, and be useful, and a blessing to the place where you live; and shall have the promise of this life and that which is to come: you shall want nothing that is truly good for you, and your necessary afflictions you will be enabled to bear; you may have some taste of communion with God in the Spirit, especially in all holy ordinances, where God prepareth a feast for your souls: you shall be heirs of heaven while you live on earth, and may foresee by faith the everlasting glory, and so may live and die in peace; and you shall never be so low, but your happiness will be incomparably greater than your misery.

How precious is every one of these blessings, which I do but briefly name, and which in this life you may receive!

2d, And then, at death your souls shall go to Christ, and at the day of judgment both soul and body shall be justified and glorified, and enter into your Master's joy, where your happiness will consist in these particulars:—

(1.) You shall be perfected yourselves; your mortal bodies shall be made immortal, and the corruptible shall put on incorruption; you shall no more be

hungry, or thirsty, or weary, or sick, nor shall you need to fear either shame, or sorrow, or death, or hell; your souls shall be perfectly freed from sin, and perfectly fitted for the knowledge, and love, and praises of the Lord.

(2.) Your employment shall be to behold your glorified Redeemer, with all your holy fellow-citizens of heaven, and to see the glory of the most blessed God, and to love him perfectly, and be beloved by him, and to praise him everlastingly.

(3.) Your glory will contribute to the glory of the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God, which is more than to have a private felicity to yourselves.

(4.) Your glory will contribute to the glorifying of your Redeemer, who will everlastingly be magnified and pleased in you that are the travail of his soul; and this is more than the glorifying of yourselves.

(5.) And the eternal Majesty, the living God, will be glorified in your glory, both as he is magnified by your praises, and as he communicateth of his glory and goodness to you, and as he is pleased in you, and in the accomplishment of his glorious work, in the glory of the New Jerusalem, and of his Son.

All this the poorest beggar of you that is converted, shall certainly and endlessly enjoy.

2. You see for what you must turn; next you must understand from what you must turn: and this is, in a word, from your carnal self, which is the end of all the unconverted:—from the flesh that would be pleased before God, and would still be enticing you thereto:—from the world, that is the bait; and from the devil, that is the angler for souls,

and the deceiver. And so from all known and wilful sins.

3. Next you must know to what end you must turn; and that is, to God as your end; to Christ as the way to the Father; to holiness as the way appointed you by Christ; and to the use of all the helps and means of grace afforded you by the Lord.

4. Lastly, you must know by what you must turn. And that is by Christ as the only Redeemer and Intercessor; and by the Holy Ghost, as the Sanctifier; and by the word, as his instrument or means; and by faith and repentance, as the means and duties on your part to be performed. All this is of necessity.

DIRECTION II.—If you will be converted and saved, be much in secret serious consideration. Inconsiderateness undoes the world. Withdraw yourselves oft into retired secrecy, and there bethink you of the end why you were made, of the life you have lived, the time you have lost, the sin you have committed; of the love, and sufferings, and fulness of Christ; of the danger you are in; of the nearness of death and judgment; of the certainty and excellency of the joys of heaven; and of the certainty and terror of the torments of hell, and eternity of both; and of the necessity of conversion and a holy life. Steep your hearts in such considerations as these.

DIRECTION III.—If you will be converted and saved, attend upon the word of God, which is the ordinary means. Read the Scripture, or hear it

read, and other holy writings that do apply it constantly; attend on the public preaching of the word. As God will light the world by the sun, and not by himself without it, so will he convert and save men by his ministers, who are the lights of the world, Acts xxvi. 17, 18. Matt. v. 14. When he hath miraculously humbled Paul, he sendeth him to Ananias, Acts ix. 10.; and when he hath sent an angel to Cornelius, it is but to bid him send for Peter, who must tell him what he is to believe and do.

Direction IV.—Betake yourselves to God in a course of earnest constant prayer. Confess and lament your former lives, and beg his grace to illuminate and convert you. Beseech him to pardon what is past, and to give you his Spirit, and change your hearts and lives, and lead you in his ways, and save you from temptation; and ply his work daily, and be not weary of it.

Direction V.—Presently give over your known and wilful sins. Make a stand, and go that way no farther. Be drunk no more, but avoid the very occasion of it. Cast away your lusts and sinful pleasures with detestation. Curse, and swear, and rail no more; and if you have wronged any, restore as Zaccheus did: if you will commit again your old sins, what blessing can you expect on the means for conversion?

Direction VI.—Presently, if possible, change your company, if it hath hitherto been bad; not by forsaking your necessary relations, but your unne-

cessary sinful companions, and "join yourselves with those that fear the Lord," and inquire of them the way to heaven.

Direction VII.—Deliver up yourselves to the Lord Jesus as the Physician of your souls, that he may pardon you by his blood, and sanctify you by his Spirit, by his word and ministers, the instruments of the Spirit. He is the way, the truth, and the life; there is no coming to the Father but by him. Nor is there any other name under heaven, by which you can be saved. Study, therefore, his person and natures, and what he hath done for you, and what he is to you, and what he will be, and how he is fitted to the full supply of all your necessities.

Direction VIII.—If you mean indeed to turn and live, do it speedily without delay. If you be not willing to turn to-day, you are not willing to do it at all. Remember you are all this while in your blood, under the guilt of many thousand sins, and under God's wrath, and you stand at the very brink of hell; there is but a step between you and death. And this is not a case for a man that is well in his wits to be quiet in. Up therefore presently, and fly as for your lives, as you would be gone out of your house if it were all on fire over your head. O, if you did but know what continual danger you live in, and what daily unspeakable loss you sustain, and what a safer and sweeter life you might live, you would not stand trifling, but presently turn. Multitudes miscarry that wilfully delay, when they are convinced that it must be done. Your lives are

short and uncertain; and what a case are you in, if you die before you thoroughly turn! You have staid too long already, and wronged God too long. Sin getteth strength and rooting while you delay. Your conversion will grow more hard and doubtful. You have much to do, and therefore put not all off to the last, lest God forsake you, and give you up to yourselves, and then you are undone for ever.

Direction IX.—If you will turn and live, do it unreservedly, absolutely, and universally. Think not to capitulate with Christ, and divide your heart betwixt him and the world; and to part with some sins, and keep the rest; and to let go that which your flesh can spare. This is but self deluding; you must in heart and resolution forsake all that you have, or else you cannot be his disciples, Luke xiv. 26, 33. If you will not take God and heaven for your portion, and lay all below at the feet of Christ, but you must needs also have your good things here, and have an earthly portion, and God and glory is not enough for you,—it is vain to dream of salvation on these terms; for it will not be. If you seem never so religious, if yet it be but a carnal righteousness, and the flesh's prosperity, or pleasure, or safety, be still excepted in your devotedness to God,—this is as certain a way to death as open profaneness, though it be more plausible.

Direction X.—If you turn and live, do it resolvedly, and stand not still deliberating, as if it were a doubtful case. Stand not wavering, as if you were uncertain whether God or the flesh be the

better master, or whether heaven or hell be the better end, or whether sin or holiness be the better way. But away with your former lusts, and presently, habitually, fixedly resolve: be not one day of one mind, and the next day of another, but be at a point with all the world, and resolvedly give up yourselves and all you have to God. Now, while you are reading, or hearing this, resolve; before you sleep another night, resolve; before you stir from the place, resolve; before Satan have time to take you off, resolve. You never turn indeed till you do resolve, and that with a firm unchangeable resolution. —So much for the Directions.

And now I have done my part in this work, that you may turn to the call of God, and live. What will become of it, I cannot tell. I have cast the seed at God's command; but it is not in my power to give the increase. I can go no further with my message; I cannot bring it to your heart, nor make it work; I cannot do your parts for you, to entertain it and consider it; I cannot do God's part, by opening your heart to cause you to entertain it; nor can I show you heaven or hell to your eye-sight, nor give you new and tender hearts. If I knew what more to do for your conversion, I hope I should do it.

But O Thou that art the gracious Father of spirits, thou hast sworn thou delightest not in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live; deny not thy blessing to these persuasions and directions, and suffer not thine enemies to triumph in thy sight, and the great deceiver of souls to prevail

against thy Son, thy Spirit, and thy Word. O pity poor unconverted sinners, that have no hearts to pity or help themselves. Command the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, and the dead to live, and let not sin and death be able to resist thee. Awaken the secure, resolve the unresolved, confirm the wavering, and let the eyes of sinners, that read these lines, be next employed in weeping over their sins, and bring them to themselves, and to thy Son, before their sins have brought them to perdition. If thou say but the word, these poor endeavours shall prosper to the winning of many a soul to their everlasting joy, and thine everlasting glory. Amen.

NOW OR NEVER.

THE

HOLY, SERIOUS, DILIGENT

BELIEVER

JUSTIFIED, ENCOURAGED, EXCITED, AND DIRECTED.

PREFACE.

THOUGH it be a great question, whether serious diligence in a corrupt religion will save a man, it is past all question, and agreed on by all sides, that no religion will save a man that is not serious, sincere and diligent in it. If thou be of the truest religion in the world, and art not true thyself to that religion, the religion is good, but it is none of thine: for if thou art not serious, hearty, and diligent in it, it is certain that thou dost not truly entertain it, and make it thine; but it is thy books that have the the true religion, or thy tongue, or brain, but not thy heart. And the best meat on thy table, or that goeth no farther than thy mouth, will never feed thee, or preserve thy life. So certain is the salvation of every holy mortified Christian, and so certain the damnation of every ungodly, worldly, fleshly sensualist, that I had a thousand fold rather have my soul in the case of a godly monk or friar, among the papists, that liveth a truly heavenly life, in the love of God and man, and in a serious, diligent obedience to God, according to his knowledge, than in the case of a Protestant, or whomsoever you can imagine to be soundest in his opinions, that is worldly and sensual, and a stranger, if not an enemy, to the power and serious practice of his own professed religion, and void of a holy and heavenly heart and

life. If ever such a man be saved, the principles of all religion deceive us.

And certainly such men's hypocrisy aggravates their sin, and will increase their misery. So many as there are in the world, that profess themselves Christians, and yet are not serious and diligent in their religion, but are ungodly neglecters or enemies of a holy life, so many hypocrites are in the world: and I wonder that their consciences call them not hypocrites, when they stand up at the Creed, or profess themselves believers. Though the congregation seeth not *hypocrite* written in their foreheads, God seeth it written on their hearts, and those that converse with them may see it written in their lives. And yet these men are the most forward to cry out against hypocrites. The devil hath taught it them, to stop the suspicion and the chafe of conscience, as he has taught the greatest schismatics, or church dividers, (the papists) to cry out most against schism and division, and pretend to unity. But these shifts blind none but fools, and forsaken consciences; and the cheat that is now detected by the wise, will quickly by God be detected before all the world; till then let them make merry in their deceits: who would envy the drunkard the pleasure of an hour's sick delight? This is their portion, and this is their time. As we have chosen and covenanted for another portion, we are content to stay the time assigned, till God shall tell them, and all the world, who was sincere, and who was the hypocrite. For our parts we believe that he is most or least sincere, that is most or least serious in the practice of his own professed religion.

For my part, I must confess that, by the mercy of God, I have made it the work of many a year, to look about me, and think wherein the felicity of man doth indeed consist. And I have long been past doubt, as much as that I am a man, that it is not in transitory sensual delights, and that these are such lean and dry commodities, and pitiful pleasures, leaving men so speedily in a forlorn state, that I am contented that my greatest enemy have my part of them. I have renounced them to God, as any part of my felicity, and I renounce them to men. Let them do with me about these things as God will give them leave. I will have a portion after death, or I will have none.

And the case is so palpable, that it is my admiration, that the contrary deceit is consistent with the nature and reason of a man; and that so many gentlemen and scholars, and persons of an ingenuous education, can no better distinguish, and can possibly conquer their reason so easily with the presence of sensual delights, and so easily make nothing of that which will be to-morrow and for ever, merely because it is not to-day. Well, I must say the wisdom and justice of God are abundantly seen in the government of the world with the liberty of the will, and determining that all men should speed as they choose.

Though I am far from crediting the many fabulous stories in that and such other books, yet I shall recite one instance in the life of Philip Nerius, the father of the Oratorians, which shall show you, that even among the Papists, holy serious diligence where it is, hath the same usage from the profane, both

clergy and laity, as in other places; and so that every where holiness is persecuted by men professing the same religion with those they persecute.

The meetings of the Oratorians and their exercises, so like those now abhorred by many, are by Barronius, that was one of them, thus described, as you may see in the life of Nerius:—

"Certainly by the divine Wisdom was it brought to pass, that in our times assemblies were instituted in the city, much after the form of those apostolical conventions: such especially as by the apostles were appointed for discoursing of divine matters, both for edifying the hearers, and for propagating the Church. It was agreed, that the zealous Christians should meet at Saint Jerome's Oratory, and there a religious meeting should be held after this manner. First, silence being made, they began with prayer, and one of the brothers read some pious lesson. At the reading of which, the father used to interpose upon occasion, explaining more fully, enlarging and vehemently inculcating on the minds of the auditors the things read, continuing his discourse, sometimes a whole hour, to the great satisfaction of the hearers, dialogue-wise, asking some of the company their opinions of such a thing. Afterwards, by his appointment, one of them went into the desk, raised upon steps; and made an oration, without flourishes, or varnish of language, composed out of the approved and choice lives of saints, sacred writ, and sentences of holy fathers. He that succeeded him, discoursed after the same manner, but on a different matter. Then followed the third, who related some part of the church-story in the order of its several ages.

Each of these had his half-hour allotted him, and performed all with marvellous delight and approbation: then singing some hymn, and going to prayers again, the company broke up. All things thus ordered and ratified by the Pope, as far as the times would suffer, the beautiful face of the primitive apostolical assembling seemed to be revived again; whereat all good men rejoicing, and many taking their model from them, the like exercises of piety were set up and practised in other places." So far Barronius.

But how were the orations esteemed and used? In chap. xvi. of Nerius's persecutions, after the mention of men's rancour and railing that maligned him, it follows, that "The prelate that was deputy of the city, moved by the reports of them that bore a spleen to Philip, sent for him, and reprehended him sharply. 'Is it not a shame, (said he) that you who profess a contempt of the world should hunt for popular applause, and walk through the city guarded with troops, with such nets as these, fishing for church preferments?' When having shrewdly taunted him with such like expressions, he prohibits him the hearing of confessions for fifteen days; or to use the customs of the Oratory, but by leave first obtained; or to lead about with him any companies of men; threatening imprisonment, upon his disobedience. Neither would he let him depart till he put in security for his appearance, saying, 'Come, you do all this not for the glory of God, but to make a party for yourself.' Meantime, while the good man was commending himself to God, having entreated divers religious persons to be instant in prayer about this business,

one appeareth and saith, 'This trouble shall be quickly over, and the work that is begun be more strongly confirmed; they who resist now, shall assist hereafter: and if any one shall dare to oppose it any longer, God shall speedily avenge it on him; the prelate, that is your chiefest adversary, shall certainly die within fifteen days.'

"And it fell out precisely as he foretold: for the prelate, the Pope's deputy, relating the proceedings to his holiness somewhat partially, died suddenly. No sooner was this blaze of persecution out, but a much fiercer was kindled against the order: for under great pretext of piety and religion, some possessed the Pope that the preachers of Saint Jerome, many times delivered things ridiculous and unsound, which argued high indiscretion or ignorance, and must needs endanger their hearers."

I would not have troubled you with any of these citations, but to let those know that are offended at my reproofs, that in all places and parties in the world, where there is any serious diligence for salvation, there are always enemies of the same profession, even among the clergy as well as others. The hindering of holy diligence and seriousness, is the work of the devil and his instruments in the world. The promoting it is the work of Christ, and of his servants. The great actions of the world are but the conflictings of these two armies, the salvation of the conquerors, and the damnation of the conquered being the end. By this contending for faith and holiness, and bearing the cross, I take myself bound to perform my covenant of professing the faith of Christ crucified, and of manfully fighting under his

banner against the devil, the world, and the flesh, to my life's end.

Reader, thou art engaged to the like as well as I, and shalt be judged accordingly, and reap as thou hast sowed. Choose and do as thou wilt speed.

NOW OR NEVER.

ECCLES. IX. 10.

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

THE mortality of man being the principal subject of Solomon in this chapter, and observing that wisdom and piety exempt not men from death, he first hence infers, that God's love or hatred to one man above another, is not to be gathered by his dealings with them here, where all things in the common course of providence come alike to all. The common sin hath introduced death as a common punishment, which levels all, and ends all the contrivances, businesses, and enjoyments of this life, to good and bad; and discriminating justice is not ordinarily manifested here: an epicure or infidel would think Solomon was here pleading his unmanly impious cause: but it is not the cessation of the life, or operations, or enjoyments of the soul that he is speaking of, as if there were no life to come, or the soul of man were not immortal; but it is the cessation of all the actions, and honours, and pleasures of this life, which to good or bad shall be no more. Here they have no more reward, the memory of them will be here

forgotten. " They have no more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun."

From hence he further infers, that the comforts of life are but short and transitory, and therefore that what the creature can afford, must be presently taken: and as the wicked shall have no more but present pleasures, so the faithful may take their lawful comforts in the present moderate use of the creatures. For if their enjoyment be of right and use to any, it is to them; and, therefore, though they may not use them to their hurt, to the pampering of their flesh, and strengthening their lusts, and hindering spiritual duties, benefits, and salvation; yet must they " serve the Lord with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things" which he giveth them.

Next he infers, from the brevity of man's life, the necessity of speed and diligence in his duty. And this is in the words of my text; where you have, 1. The duty commanded. 2. The reason or motive to enforce it.

The duty is in the first part, " Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," that is, whatever work is assigned thee by God to do in this thy transitory life, " do it with thy might;" that is, 1. Speedily, without delay. 2. Diligently; and as well as thou art able, and not with slothfulness, or by halves.

2. The motive is in the latter part, " For there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest;" that is, it must be *now or never*. The grave, where thy work cannot be done, will quickly end thy opportunities. The Chaldee paraphrase appropriates the sense too

narrowly to works of charity, or alms: "Whatsoever good and alms-giving thou findest to do;" and the moving reason they read accordingly, "for nothing but the works of righteousness and mercy follow thee." But the words are more general, and the sense is obviously contained in these two propositions:—

Doctrine 1.—"The work of this life cannot be done when this life is ended: or, There is no working in the grave, to which we are all making haste."

Doctrine 2.—"Therefore, while we have time, we must do our best: or do the work of this present life with vigour and diligence."

It is from an unquestionable and commonly acknowledged truth, that Solomon here urgeth us to diligence in duty; and therefore to prove it would be but loss of time. As there are two worlds for man to live in, and so two lives for man to live, so each of these lives hath its peculiar employment. This is the life of preparation: the next is the life of rewards or punishments. We are now but in the womb of eternity, and must live hereafter in the open world. We are now but sent to school to learn the work that we must do for ever: this is the time of our apprenticeship; we are learning the trade that we must live upon in heaven. We run now, that we may then receive the crown; we fight now, that we may then triumph in victory. The grave hath no work; but heaven hath work, and hell hath suffering: there is no repentance unto life hereafter; but there is repentance to torment and to desperation. There is no believing of a happiness unseen

in order to the obtaining of it; or of a misery unseen in order to the escaping of it; nor believing in a Saviour in order to these ends. But there is the fruition of the happiness which was here believed; and feeling of the misery that men would not believe; and suffering from him as a righteous Judge, whom they rejected as a merciful Saviour. So that it is not all work that ceaseth at our death; but only the work of this present life.

And indeed no reason can show us the least probability of doing our work when our time is gone, that was given us to do it in. If it can be done, it must be, 1. By the recalling of our time. 2. By the return of life. 3. Or, by opportunity in another life. But there is no hope of any of these.

1. Who knoweth not that time cannot be recalled? That which once was, will be no more. Yesterday will never come again. To-day is passing, and will not return. You may work while it is day; but when you have lost that day, it will not return for you to work in. While your candle burneth, you may make use of its light; but when it is done, it is too late to use it. No force of medicine, no orator's elegant persuasions, no worldling's wealth, no prince's power, can call back one day or hour of time. If they could, what endeavours would there be used, when extremity hath taught them to value what they now despise! What bargaining would there be at last, if time could be purchased for any thing that man can give. Then misers would bring out their wealth, and say, 'All this will I give for one day's time of repentance more.' And lords and knights would lay down their honours, and

say, ' Take all, and let us be the basest beggars, if we may have but one year of the time that we misspent.' Then kings would lay down their crowns, and say, ' Let us be equal with the lowest subjects, so we may but have the time again that we wasted in the cares and pleasures of the world.' Kingdoms would then seem a contemptible price for the recovery of time.

The time that is now idled and talked away; the time that is now feasted and complimented away, that is unnecessarily sported and slept away; that is wickedly and presumptuously sinned away; how precious will it one day seem to all! How happy a bargain would they think they had made, if at the dearest rates they could redeem it?

The profanest mariner falls a praying, when he fears his time is at an end. If importunity would then prevail, how earnestly would they pray for the recovery of time that formerly derided praying, or minded it not, or could not have a while, or mocked God with lip-service, and customary forms, and feigned words instead of praying! What a liturgy would death teach the trifling time-despising gallants, the idle, busy, dreaming, active, ambitious, covetous lovers of this world, if time could be entreated to return! How passionately then would they roar out their requests! ' O that we might once see the days of hope, and means, and mercy, which once we saw, and would not see! O that we had those days to spend in penitential tears and prayers, and holy preparations for an endless life, which we spent at cards, in needless recreations, in idle talk, in humouring others, in the pleasing of our

flesh, or in the inordinate cares and businesses of the world! O that our youthful vigour might return! that our years might be renewed! that the days we spent in vanity might be recalled! that ministers might again be sent to us publicly and privately, with the message of grace which we once made light of! that the sun would once more shine upon us! and that patience and mercy would once more re-assume their work!'

If cries or tears, or price or pains, would bring back lost abused time, how happy were the now distracted, dreaming, dead-hearted, and impenitent world! If it would then serve their turn to say to the vigilant believers, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out;" or to cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," when the door is shut; the foolish would be saved as well as the wise. But "this is the day of salvation! this is the accepted time." While it is called to-day, hearken, and harden not your hearts. Awake, thou that sleepest, and stand up from thy slothful, wilful death, and use the light that is afforded thee by Christ; or else the everlasting utter darkness will shortly end thy time and hope.

2. And as time can never be recalled, so life shall never be here restored: "If a man die, shall he live (here) again?" All the days of our appointed time we must therefore wait, in faith and diligence, till our change shall come. One life is appointed us on earth, to despatch the work that our everlasting life dependeth on: and we shall have but one. Lose that, and all is lost for ever: yet you may hear, and read, and learn, and pray; but when this life is ended, it shall be so no more. You shall rise from

the dead indeed to judgment, and to the life that you are now preparing for; but never to such a life as this on earth: your life is as the fighting of a battle, that must be won or lost at once. There is no coming hither again to mend what is done amiss. Oversights must be presently corrected by repentance, or else they are everlastingly past remedy. Now, if you be not truly converted, you may be; if you find that you are carnal and miserable, you may be healed; if you are unpardoned, you may be pardoned; if you are enemies, you may be reconciled to God: but when once the thread of life is cut, your opportunities are at an end. Now you may inquire of your friends and teachers what a poor soul must do to be saved; and you may receive particular instructions and exhortations, and God may bless them, to the illuminating, renewing, and saving of your souls. But when life is past, it will be so no more. O then, if departed souls might but return, and once more be tried with the means of life, what joyful tidings would it be! How welcome would the messenger be that bringeth it! Had hell but such an offer as this, and would any cries procure it from their righteous Judge, O what a change would be among them! How importunately would they cry to God, 'O send us once again unto the earth! Once more let us see the face of mercy, and hear the tenders of Christ and of salvation! Once more let the ministers offer us their helps, and teach in season and out of season, in public and in private, and we will refuse their help and exhortations no more: we will hate them, and drive them away from our houses and towns no more.

Once more let us have thy word, and ordinances, and try whether we will not believe them, and use them better than we did. Once more let us have the help and company of thy saints, and we will scorn them, and abuse them, and persecute them no more. O for the great invaluable mercy of such a life as once we had! O try us once more with such a life, and see whether we will not contemn the world, and close with Christ, and live as strictly, and pray as earnestly, as those that we hated and abused for so doing! O that we might once more be admitted into the holy assemblies, and have the Lord's-days to spend in the business of our salvation! We would plead no more against the power and purity of the ordinances; we would no more call that day a burden, nor hate them that spent it in works of holiness, nor plead for the liberty of the flesh therein.'

It makes my heart even shake within me, to think with what cries those damned souls would strive with God, and how they would roar out, 'O try us once again!' if they had but the least encouragement of hope. But it will not be, it must not be. They had their day, and would not know it. They cannot lose their time and have it. They had faithful guides, and would not follow them. Teachers they had, but would not learn. The dust of their feet must witness against them; because their entertained, obeyed message, cannot witness for them. Long did Christ wait with the patient tenders of his blood and Spirit; his grace was long and earnestly offered them, but could not be regarded and received: and they cannot finally refuse Christ, and yet have

Christ; or refuse his mercy, and yet be saved by it. He that would have Lazarus sent from the dead to warn his unbelieving brethren on earth, no doubt would have strongly purposed himself on a reformation, if he might once more have been tried: and how earnestly would he have begged for such a trial, that begged so hard for a drop of water? But, alas! such mouths must be stopped for ever with—"Remember that thou, in thy lifetime, received thy good things."

So that "it is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the judgment." But there is no return to earth again: the places of your abode, employment, and delight, shall know you no more. You must see these faces of your friends, and converse in flesh with men no more. This world, those houses, that wealth and honour, as to any fruition, must be to you as if you had never known them.

You must assemble here but a little while. Yet a little longer, and we must preach, and you must hear it no more for ever. That therefore which you will do, must presently be done, or it will be too late. If ever you will repent and believe, it must be now. If ever you will be converted and sanctified, it must be now. If ever you will be pardoned and reconciled to God, it must be now. If ever you will reign, it is now that you must fight and conquer. "O that you were wise, that you understood this, and that you would consider your latter end!" And that you would let those words sink down into your hearts, which came from the heart of the Redeemer, as was witnessed by his

tears: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." And that these warnings may not be the less regarded, because you have so often heard them; when often hearing increaseth your obligation, and diminisheth not the truth, or your danger.

3. And as there is no return to earth, so is there no doing this work hereafter. Heaven and hell are for other work. If the infant be dead-born, the open world will not revive him: that which is generated, and born a beast or serpent, will not, by all the influences of the heavens, or all the powers of sun or earth, become a man. The second and third concoction presuppose the first; the harvest doth presuppose the seed-time, and the labour of the husbandman. It is now that you must sow, and hereafter that you must reap. It is now that you must work, and then that you must receive your wages.

Is this believed and considered by the sleepy world? Alas! sirs, do you live as men that must live here no more? Do you work as men that must work no more, and pray as men that must pray no more, when once the time of work is ended? What thinkest thou, poor besotted sinner! will God command the sun to stand still while thou rebellest or forgettest thy work and him! Dost thou expect he should pervert the course of nature, and continue the spring and seed-time till thou hast a mind to sow? or that he should return the dead-born or mishapen infant into the womb, that it may be better formed or quickened? Will he renew thy age, and make

thee young again, and call back the hours that thou hast prodigally wasted on thy lusts and idleness? Canst thou look for this at the hand of God, when nature and Scripture assure thee of the contrary? If not, why hast thou not yet done with thy beloved sins? Why hast thou not yet begun to live? Why sittest thou still while thy soul is unrenewed, and all thy preparation for death and judgment is yet to make? How fain would Satan find thee thus at death? How fain would he have leave to blow out thy candle, before thou hast entered into the way of life? Dost thou look to have preachers sent after thee, to bring thee the mercy which thy contempt here left behind? Wilt thou hear and be converted in the grave and hell? or wilt thou be saved without holiness? that is, in despite of God that hath resolved it shall not be. O ye sons of sleep, of death, of darkness, awake, and live, and hear the Lord, before the grave and hell have shut their mouths upon you! Hear now, lest hearing be too late! Hear now, if you will ever hear. Hear now, if you have ears to hear! And, O ye sons of light, that see what sleeping sinners see not, call to them, and ring them such a peal of lamentations, tears, and compassionate entreaties, as is suited to such a dead and doleful state; who knows but God may bless it to awake them?

If any of you be so far awakened as to ask me what I am calling you to do, my text tells you in general, Up and be doing; look about you, and see what you have to do, and do it with your might.

1. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," that is, whatsoever is a duty imposed by the Lord, what-

soever is a means conducing to thy own or others' welfare; whatsoever necessity calleth thee to do, and opportunity alloweth thee to do.

"Thy hand findeth;" that is, thy executive powers by the conduct of thy understanding, is now to do.

"Do it with thy might." Do thy best in it.

1. Trifle not, but do it presently, without unnecessary delay.

2. Do it resolutely; remain not doubtful, unresolved, in suspense, as if it were yet a question with thee whether thou shouldst do it, or not.

3. Do it with thy most awakened affections, and serious intention of the powers of thy soul. Sleepiness and insensibility are most unsuitable to such works.

4. Do it with all necessary forecast and contrivance: not with a distracting hindering care; but with such a care as may show that you despise not your Master, and are not regardless of his work: and with such a care as is suited to the difficulties and nature of the thing, and is necessary to the due accomplishment of it.

5. Do it not slothfully, but vigorously and with diligence. Stick not at thy labour, lest thou hear, "Thou wicked and slothful servant." "Hide not thy hand in thy bosom with the slothful," and say not, "There is a lion in the way." The negligent and the vicious, the waster and the slothful, differ but as one brother from another. As the self-murder of the wilful ungodly, so also the desire of the slothful killeth him, because his hands refuse to labour. "The soul of the sluggard desireth and

hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." "Be not slothful in business, but be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

6. Do it with constancy, and not with destructive pauses and intermissions, or with weariness and turning back. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that is of clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." "Be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." "Be not weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." These six particulars are necessary, if you will observe the precept in my text.

But, that misunderstanding hinder not the performance, I shall acquaint you further with the sense, by these few explicatory cautions.

1. The might and diligence here required, exclude not the necessity of deliberation and prudent conduct. Otherwise, the faster you go, the further you may go out of the way; and misguided zeal may spoil all the work, and make it but an injury to others or yourselves. A little imprudence in the season, and order, and manner of a duty, sometimes may spoil it, and hinder the success, and make it do more hurt than good. How many a sermon, or prayer, or reproof, is made the matter of derision and contempt, for some imprudent passages or deportment! God sendeth not his servants to be jesters of the world, or to play the madman as David in his fears; we must be wise and innocent, as well as resolute and valiant: though fleshly and worldly wisdom be not desirable, as being but fool-

ishness with God; yet the wisdom which is from above, and is first pure and then peaceable, and is acquainted with the high and hidden mysteries, and is justified of her children, must be the guide of all our holy actions. Holiness is not blind: illumination is the first part of sanctification. Believers are children of the light. Nothing requireth so much wisdom as the matters of God, and of our salvation. Folly is most unsuitable to such excellent employments, and most unbeseeming the sons of the Most High. It is a spirit of wisdom that animateth all the saints. "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." It is the treasures of wisdom that dwell in Christ, and are communicated to his members. We must "walk in wisdom toward them that are without." And our works must be "shown out of a good conversation, with meekness of wisdom." Yet I must needs say, that it is more in great things than in small, in the substance than the circumstances: in a sound judgment and estimate of things, and suitable choice and prosecution, than in fine expressions or deportment answering proud men's expectations.

2. Though you must work with your might, yet with a diversity agreeable to the quality of your several works. Some works must be preferred before others: all cannot be done at once. That is a sin out of season, which in season is a duty. The greatest, and the most urgent work must be pre-

ferred. And some works must be done with double fervour and resolution, and some with less. Buying, and selling, and marrying, and possessing, and using the world, must be done with a fear of overdoing, and in a manner as if we did them not, though they also must have a necessary diligence. God's "kingdom and its righteousness must be first sought." And our labour for the meat that perisheth, must be comparatively as none: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

3. Lastly, it is not an irregular, nor a self-disturbing vexatious violence that is required of us; but a sweet well settled resolution, and a delightful expeditious diligence, that make the wheels more easily get over those rubs and difficulties that clog and stop a slothful soul.

And now will you lend me the assistance of your consciences, for the transcribing of this command of God upon your hearts, and taking out a copy of this order, for the regulating of your lives? Whatsoever is not a work so comprehensive as to include any vanity or sin; but so comprehensive as to include all our duty.

1. To begin with the lowest: the very works of your bodily callings must have diligence. "In the sweat of your brows you must eat your bread." "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do." "He that will not work, let him not eat." Disorderly walkers, busy-bodies, that will not work with quietness, and eat their own bread, are to be avoided and shamed by the church. "For we hear

that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." Lazy servants are unfaithful to men, and disobedient to God, who commandeth them to "obey their masters according to the flesh, (unbelieving, ungodly masters) in all things, (that concern their service) and that not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, and in the fear of God, do whatsoever they do as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord (even for this) they shall receive the reward of the inheritance." "But he that doth wrong (by slothfulness, or unfaithfulness) shall receive for the wrong which he hath done."

Success is God's ordinary temporal reward of diligence: "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute. The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious." And diseases, poverty, shame, disappointment, or self-tormenting melancholy, are his usual punishments of sloth. Hard labour redeemeth time: you will have the more to lay out on greater works: the slothful is still behind hand, and therefore must leave much of his work undone.

2. Are you parents or governors of families? You have work to do for God, and for your children and servants' souls. Do it with your might: deal wisely, but seriously and frequently with them about their sin, their duty, and their hopes of heaven; tell them whither they are going, and which way

they must go. Make them understand that they have a higher Father and Master that must be first served, and greater work than yours. Waken them from their natural insensibility and sloth: turn not all your family duties into lifeless customary forms; whether extemporary, or by rote; speak about God, and heaven, and hell, and holiness, with that seriousness which beseems men that believe what they say, and would have those they speak to, to believe it. Talk not either drowsily, or lightly, or jestingly of such dreadful, or joyful, inexpressible things. Remember, that your families and you are going to the grave, and to the world where there is no more room for your exhortations. There is no catechising, examining, or serious instructing them in the grave, whither they and you are going.—It must be *now or never:* and therefore do it with your might. "The words of God must be in your hearts, and you must diligently teach them to your children, talking of them when you sit in your houses, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."

3. Have you ignorant or ungodly neighbours, whose misery calls for your compassion and relief? Speak to them, and help them with prudent diligence. Lose not your opportunities: stay not till death hath stopped your mouths, or stopped their ears. Stay not till they are out of hearing, and taken from your converse. Stay not till they are in hell, before you warn them of it, or till heaven be lost, before you have seriously called to them to remember it. Go to their houses: take all opportunities: stoop to their infirmities: bear with un-

thankful forwardness; it is for men's salvation. Remember there is no place for your instructions or exhortations in the grave or hell. Your dust cannot speak, and their dust cannot hear. Up, therefore, and be doing with all your might.

4. Hath God intrusted you with the riches of the world; with many talents or with few, by which he looketh you should relieve the needy, and especially should promote those works of piety which are the greatest charity? Give prudently, but willingly and liberally, while you have to give. It is your gain: the time of market for your souls; and of laying up a treasure in heaven, and putting your money to the most gainful use; and of making you friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, and furthering your salvation by that which hindereth other men's, and occasioneth their perdition. "As you have opportunity, do good to all men, but especially to them of the household of faith." "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven and to eight; for thou knowest not what evil may be upon the earth." "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it. Say not to thy neighbour, go and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee." Lay up a foundation for the time to come. Do good before thy heart be hardened, thy riches blasted and consumed, thy opportunities taken away; part with it before

it part with thee. Remember it must be *now or never*. There is no working in the grave.

5. Hath God intrusted you with power or interest, by which you may promote his honour in the world, and relieve the oppressed, and restrain the rage of impious malice? Hath he made you governors, and put the sword of justice into your hands? Up then and be doing with your might. Defend the innocent, protect the servants of the Lord, cherish them that do well, be a terror to the wicked, encourage the strictest obedience to the universal Governor, discountenance the breakers of his laws. Look not to be reverenced or obeyed before Him, or more carefully than he; openly maintain his truth and worship without fear or shame; deal gently and tenderly with his lambs and little ones; search after vice, that you may successfully suppress it. Hate those temptations that would draw you to man-pleasing, temporising, remissness, or countenancing sin; but especially those that would insnare you in a controversy with heaven, and in quarrels against the ways of holiness, or in that self-confounding sin of abusing and opposing the people that are most careful to please the Lord. Your trust is great, and so is your advantage to do good; and how great will be your account, and how dreadful, if you be unfaithful! As you are of more importance than hundreds or thousands of the meaner sort, and your actions do much good or hurt; so you must expect to be accordingly dealt with, when you come to the impartial, final judgment. Befriend the Gospel as the charter of your everlasting privileges; own those that Christ hath told you he will own. Use them

as men that are ready to hear this pronounced, "Insomuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me." Know not a wicked person: but let your eyes be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell therein, and "lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty." "Let those that work the work of the Lord be with you without fear." Remember that it is the character of a pharisee and hypocrite, to see the mote of the non-observance of a ceremony, or tradition, or smaller matter or difference in religion in their brother's eye, and not to see the beam of hypocrisy, injustice, and malicious cruel opposition to Christ and his disciples, in their own eyes; and that it is the brand of them that please not God, that are filling up their sins, on whom God's wrath is coming to the utmost, to persecute the servants of the Lord, forbidding them to preach to the people that they might be saved.

Learn well the second and the hundred and first Psalm, and write these sentences on your walls and doors, as an antidote against that self-undoing sin: "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." "Him that is weak in the faith, receive; but not to doubtful disputations. For God hath received him." "He that receiveth you receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward: and

whoso shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in nowise lose his reward." If you love not the godly, love yourselves, so far as to such self-love is possible; wound not your own hearts to make their fingers bleed; damn not your souls, and that by the surest, nearest way, that you may hurt their bodies. Provoke not God to thrust you from his presence, and deny your requests, by your dealing so with them: stop not your own mouths, when your misery will bespeak your loudest cries for mercy, by your stopping the mouths of the servants of the Lord, and refusing to hear their request for justice. If you have the serpent's enmity against the woman's seed, you must expect the serpent's doom: your heads will be bruised, when you have bruised their heels. Kick not against the pricks. "Let not briers and thorns set themselves in battle against the Lord, lest he go therefore through them, and burn them together."

I speak not any of this by way of accusation or dishonourable reflection on the magistrate. Blessed be God, that hath given us the comfort of your defence. But knowing what the tempter aimeth at, and where it is that your danger lieth, and by what means the rulers of the earth have been undone, faithfulness commandeth me to tell you of the snare, and to set before you good and evil, as ever I would escape the guilt of betraying you by flattery, or cruel and cowardly silence.

6. To come yet a little nearer to you, and speak of the work that is yet to be done in your own souls;

are any of you yet in the state of unrenewed nature, born only of the flesh, and not of the Spirit? "Minding the things of the flesh, and not the things of the Spirit," and consequently yet in the power of Satan, taken captive by him at his will? Up and be doing, if thou lovest thy soul. If thou carest whether thou shalt be in joy or misery for ever, bewail thy sin and spiritual distress. Go to Christ, cry mightily to him for his renewing, reconciling, and pardoning grace. Plead his satisfaction, his merits, and his promises; away with thy rebellion, and thy beloved sin; deliver up thy soul entirely to Christ, to be sanctified, governed and saved by him. Make no more demurs about it; it is not a matter to be questioned, or trifled in. Let the earth be acquainted with thy bended knees, and the air with thy complaints and cries, and men with thy confessions and inquiries after the way of life; and heaven with thy sorrows, desires, and resolutions, till thy soul be acquainted with the Spirit of Christ; and with the new, the holy and heavenly nature, and thy heart have received the transcript of God's law, the impress of the Gospel, and so the image of thy Creator and Redeemer. Labour at this work with all thy might; for there is no conversion, renovation, or repentance unto life, in the grave whither thou goest. It must be now or never. And never saved if never sanctified: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

7. Hast thou any prevailing sin to mortify, that either reigneth in thee, or woundeth thee and keepeth thy soul in darkness and unacquaintedness with God? Assault it resolutely; reject it speedily;

abhor the motions of it; turn away from the persons or things that would entice thee. Hate the doors of the harlot and of the ale-house, or the gaming-house; and go not as the "ox to the slaughter, and as a bird to the fowler's snare, and as a fool to the correction of the stocks, as if thou knewest not that it is for thy life." Why, thou befooled, stupid soul, wilt thou be tasting of the poisoned cup? Wilt thou be sporting thee with the bait? Hast thou no where to walk or play, but at the brink of hell? Must not the flesh be crucified, with its "affections and lusts?" Must it not be tamed and mortified, or thy soul condemned? "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Run not therefore as at uncertainty; fight not as one "that beats the air." Seing this must be done, or thou art undone, delay and dally with sin no longer. Let this be the day; resolve, and resist it with thy might: it must be now or never: when death comes it is too late. It will then be no reward to leave thy sin, which thou canst keep no longer: no part of holiness or happiness, that thou art not drunk, or proud, or lustful, in the grave or hell. As thou art wise, therefore, know and take thy time.

8. Art thou in a declined, fallen state? Decayed in grace? Hast thou lost thy first desires and love? Do thy first works, and do them with thy might. Delay not, but remember from whence thou art fallen, and what thou hast lost by it, and into how sad a case thy folly and negligence have brought thee; say, "I will go and return unto my first

husband, for then was it better with me than now." Cry out with Job, "O that I were as in months past; as in the days when God preserved me! when his candle shined upon my head, and when, by his light, I walked through darkness. As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was on my tabernacle, when the Almighty was yet with me." Return, while thou hast day, lest the night surprise thee: loiter and delay no more; thou hast lost by it already. Thou art far behind-hand: bestir, thee, therefore, with all thy might.

9. Art thou in the darkness of uncertainty concerning thy conversion, and thy everlasting state? Dost thou not know whether thou art in a state of life or death? And what should become of thee, if this were the day or hour of thy change? If thou art careful about it, and inquirest, and usest the means that God hath appointed thee for assurance, I have then no more to say to thee now; but wait on God, and thou shalt not be disappointed or ashamed. Be patient and obedient, and the light of Christ will shine upon thee, and yet thou shalt see the days of peace. But if thou art careless in thy uncertainty, and mindest not so great a business, be awakened, and call thy soul to its account; search and examine thy heart and life; read and consider, and take advice of faithful guides. Canst thou carelessly sleep, and laugh, and sport, and follow thy lesser business, as if thy salvation were made sure, when thou knowest not where thou must dwell for ever? "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove yourselves; know ye not your own selves, that Christ is in you, except ye be re-

probates?" "Give all diligence (in time) to make your calling and election sure." In the grave and hell there is no making sure of heaven; you are then past inquiries and self-examination, in order to any recovery or hope. Another kind of trial will finally resolve you. Up, therefore, and be diligent in the work: it must be now or never.

10. In all the duties of thy profession of piety, justice, or charity, to God, thyself, or others, up and be doing with thy might. Art thou seeking to inflame thy soul with love to God? Plunge thyself in the ocean of his love; admire his mercies; gaze upon the representations of his transcendent goodness; "O taste and see that the Lord is gracious!" Remember that he must be loved with all thy heart, and soul, and might; canst thou pour out thy love upon a creature, and give but a few barren drops to God?

When thou art fearing, let his fear command thy soul, and conquer all the fear of man. When thou art trusting him, do it without distrust, and cast all thy care and thyself upon him: trust him as a creature should trust his God, and the members of Christ should trust their head and dear Redeemer. When thou art making mention of his great and dreadful name, O do it with reverence, and awe, and admiration: and "take not the name of God in vain!" When thou art reading his word, let the majesty of the Author, and the greatness of the matter, and the gravity of the style, possess thee with an obedient fear. Love it, and let it be sweeter to thee than the honey-comb, and more precious than thousands of gold and silver. Resolve to do what

there thou findest to be the will of God. When thou art praying in secret, or in thy family, "do it with thy might:" cry mightily to God, as a soul under sin, wants, and danger, that is stepping into an endless life, should do. Let the reverence and the fervour of thy prayers, show that it is God himself that thou art speaking to: that it is heaven itself that thou art praying for; hell itself that thou art praying to be saved from. Wilt thou be dull and senseless on such an errand to the living God? Remember what lieth upon thy failing or prevailing: and that it must be now or never.

Art thou a preacher of the gospel, and takest charge of the souls of men? "Take heed to thyself and to the whole flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made thee an overseer, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Let not the blood of souls, and the blood that purchased them, "be required at thy hands." Thou art charged "before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, that thou preach his word: be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." "Teach every man, and exhort every man,—even night and day with tears." "Save men with fear, pulling them out of the fire. Cry aloud: lift up thy voice like a trumpet; tell them of their transgressions." Yet thou art alive, and they alive; yet thou hast a tongue, and they have ears: the final sentence hath not yet cut off their hopes. Preach, therefore, and preach with all thy might. Exhort them, privately and

personally, with all the seriousness thou canst. Quickly, or it will be too late; prudently, or Satan will overreach thee; fervently, or thy words are likely to be disregarded. Remember, when thou lookest them in the faces, when thou beholdest the assemblies, that they must be converted or condemned, sanctified on earth, or tormented in hell; and that this is the day: it must be now or never.

In a word, apply this quickening precept to all the duties of the Christian course. Be religious, and just, and charitable, in good earnest, if you would be taken for such when you look for the reward. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter, and shall not be able." Many run, but few receive the prize: so run that you may obtain. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" Let the doting world deride your diligence, and set themselves to hinder and afflict you: it will be but a little while before experience change their minds, and make them talk differently. Follow Christ fully: be diligent, and lose no time. The Judge is coming. Let not words, nor any thing that man can do, prevail with you to sit down, or stop you in a journey of such importance. Please God, though flesh, and friends, and all the world should be displeased. Whatever come of your reputation, or estates, or liberties, or lives, be sure you look to life eternal; and cast not that, on any hazard, for a withering flower, or a pleasant dream, or a picture of commodity, or any vanity that the Deceiver can present. "For what shall it profit you, to win the

world, and lose your soul?" or to have been honoured and obeyed on earth, when you are under the wrath of God in hell? or, that your flesh was once provided with variety of delights, when it is turned to rottenness, and must be raised to torments? Hold on, therefore, in faith, and holiness, and hope, though earth and hell should rage against you, though all the world, by force of flattery, should do the worst they can to hinder you. This is your trial: your warfare is the resisting of deceit, and of all that would tempt you to consent to the means of your own destruction: consent not, and you conquer; conquer, and you are crowned. The combat is all about your wills; yield, and you have lost the day. If the prating of ungodly fools, or the contemptuous jeers of hardened sinners, or the frowns of unsanctified superiors, could prevail against the Spirit of Christ, and the workings of an enlightened mind, then what man would be saved? You deserve damnation, if you will run into it, to avoid a mock, or the loss of any thing that man can take from you. You are unmeet for heaven, if you can part with it to save your purses. "Fear not them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but fear him that can destroy both body and soul in hell." Obey God, though all the world forbid you. No power can save you from his justice; and none of them can deprive you of his reward. Though you lose your heads, you shall save your crowns; you no way save your lives so certainly, as by such losing them. One thing is necessary: do that with speed, and care, and diligence, which must be done, or you are lost for ever. They that are now against

your much and earnest praying, will shortly cry as loud themselves in vain. When it is too late, how fervently will they beg for mercy, that now deride you for valuing and seeking it in time! But "then they shall call upon God, but he will not answer; they shall seek him early, but shall not find him: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of his counsel, but despised all his reproof." Up, therefore, and work with all thy might. Let unbelievers trifle, that know not that the righteous God stands over them, and know not that they are *now* to work for everlasting, and know not that heaven or hell is at the end. Let them delay, and laugh, and play, and dream away their time, that are drunk with prosperity, and mad with fleshly lusts and pleasures, and have lost their reason in the cares, and delusions, and vain-glory of the world. But shall it be so with thee, whose eyes are opened, who seest the God, the heaven, the hell, which they do but hear of as unlikely things? Wilt thou live awake, as they that are asleep? Wilt thou do in the day-light, as they do in the dark? Shall freemen live as Satan's slaves? Shall the living lie as still and useless as the dead? "Work then while it is day; for the night is coming, when none can work."

It is not the works of the Mosaical law, nor works that are imagined for their proper value to deserve any thing at the hands of God, that I am all this while persuading you too; but it is the works prescribed you by Christ in the gospel, according to which you shall be shortly judged to joy or misery,

by Christ himself, that will call you to account. These must be done with all your might.

But you will say, perhaps, 'Alas! what might have we? We have no sufficiency of ourselves: without Christ we can do nothing. And this we find when it comes to the trial.'

1. I answer, It is not might that is originally thine own, that I am calling thee to exercise; but that which thou hast already received from God, and that which he is ready to bestow. Use well but all the might thou hast, and thou shalt find thy labour is not in vain.

2. Art thou willing to use the might thou hast, and to have more, and use it if thou hadst it? If thou art, thou hast then the strength of Christ: thou standest not, and workest not, by thy own strength; his promise is engaged to thee, and his strength is sufficient for thee. But if thou art not willing, thou art without excuse; when thou hast heaven and hell set open in the word of God to make thee willing, God will distinguish thy wilfulness from unwilling weakness.

3. There is more power in all of you than you use, or than you are well aware of. It wanteth but awakening to bring it into act. Do you not find, in your repentings, that the change is more in your will, than in your power? And in the awakening of your will and reason into act, than in the addition of mere abilities? And that therefore you befool yourselves for your sins and your neglects, and wonder that you had no more use of your understandings? Let but a storm at sea, or violent sickness, or approaching death, rouse up and awaken the

powers which you have, and you will find there was much more asleep in you than you used.

I shall, therefore, next endeavour to awaken your abilities, or tell you how you should awaken them.

When your souls are drowsy, and you are forgetting your God, and your latter end, and matters of eternity have little force and favour with you, when you grow lazy and superficial, and religion seems a lifeless thing, and you do your duty as if it were in vain, or against your wills; when you can lose your time, and delay repentance; and friends, and profit, and reputation, and pleasure, can be heard against the word of God, and take you off; when you do all by halves, and languish in your Christian course, as near to death—stir up your souls with the urgency of such questions as these:—

Question 1. Can I do no more than this for God, who gave me all, who deserveth all? Who seeth me in my duties and my sins? When he puts me purposely on the trial, what can I do for his sake and service? Can I do no more? Can I love him no more, and obey, and watch, and work no more?

Question 2. Can I do no more than this for Christ? For him that did so much for me? That obeyed so perfectly; walked so meekly; despising all the baits, and honours, and riches of the world? That loved me to the death; and offereth me freely all his benefits, and would bring me to eternal glory? Are these careless, cold, and dull endeavours, my best return for all his mercy?

Question 3. Can I do no more, when my salvation

is the prize? when heaven or hell depends upon it? When I know this beforehand, and may see, in the glass of the Holy Scriptures, what is prepared for the diligent and the negligent, and what work there is, and will be forever, in heaven and hell, on these accounts? Could I not do more, if my house were on fire, or my estate, or life, or friend, in danger, than I do for my salvation?

Question 4. Can I do no more for the souls of men; when they are undone for ever if they be not speedily delivered? Is this my love and compassion to my neighbour, my servant, friend, or child?

Question 5. Can I do no more for the Church of God? for the public good? for the peace and welfare of the nation, and our posterity? in suppressing sin? in praying for deliverance? or in promoting works of public benefit?

Question 6. Can I do no more, that have loitered so long? and go no faster, that have slept till the evening of my days, when diligence must be the discovery of my repentance?

Question 7. Can I do no more, that know not now but I am doing my last? that see how fast my time makes haste, and know I must be quickly gone? that know it must be now or never; and that this is all the time I shall have, on which an endless life dependeth?

Question 8. Can I do no better, when I know beforehand what different aspects diligence and negligence will have, to the awakened soul, in the review? What a comfort will it be, at death and judgment, to be able to say, I loitered not away the time I had! And what a vexatious and heart-disquieting

thing it will then be, to look back on time as irrecoverably lost, and on a life of trial as cast away upon impertinencies, while the work that we lived for lay undone! Shall I now, by trifling, prepare such tormenting thoughts for my awakened conscience?

Question 9. Can I do no more, when I am sure I cannot do too much, and am sure there is nothing else to be preferred? And that it is this I live for; and that life is for action, and disposeth thereunto (and holy life for holy action); and that it is better not to live, than not attain the ends of living; when I have so many and unwearied enemies; when sloth is my danger, and the advantage of my enemy; when I know that resolution and vigorous diligence are so necessary, that all is lost without it,—will temptations be resisted and self denied, and concupiscence mortified, and fleshly desires tamed and subdued, and sin cast out, and a holy communion with heaven maintained, with idleness and sloth? Will families be well ordered, and church, or city, or country, well governed? Will the careless sinners, that I am bound to help, be converted and saved with sitting still, and with some heartless, cold, endeavours?

Question 10. Can I do no more, that have so much help? that have mercies of all sorts encouraging me, and creatures attending me; that have health to enable me, or affliction to remember and excite me; that have such a master, such a work, such a reward, that better cannot be desired; who is less excusable for neglect than I?

Question 11. Could I do no more, if I were sure

that my salvation lay on this one duty? that, according to this prayer, it should go with me for ever? or if the soul of my child, or servant, or neighbour, must speed for ever, as my endeavours speed with them now for their conversion? For ought I know, it may be thus.

Question 12. Would I have God to come with the spur and the rod? How do I complain when affliction is upon me? And will I neither endure it, nor be quickened without it? Is it not better to mend my pace, and work on easier terms?

I would not have distressed souls to use these considerations merely to disquiet themselves for their infirmities, and so live in heaviness and self-vexation, because they cannot be so good as they desire, or do as much, and as well, as they should do: it is not despair that will mend the matter, but make it worse. But I would wish lazy, slothful souls to plead these questions with themselves, and try whether they have no quickening power, if closely urged and seriously considered.

Believe it, sirs, it is the deceitfulness of prosperity that keeps up the reputation of a slothful life, and makes holy diligence seem unnecessary. When affliction comes, awakened reason is ashamed of this, and seeth it as an odious thing.

By this time, you may see what difference there is between the judgment of God and of the world; and what to think of the understandings of those men, be they high or low, learned or unlearned, who hate or oppose this holy diligence. God bids us love, and seek, and serve him, with all our heart, and soul, and might: and these men call them Zeal-

ots and Puritans that endeavour it; though, alas! they fall exceedingly short, when they have done their best. It is one of the most wonderful, monstrous deformities that ever befel the nature of man; that men, that learned men—that men, that in other things are wise, should seriously think that the utmost diligence to obey the Lord, and save our souls, is needless; and that ever they should take it for a crime, and make it a matter of reproach: that the serious, diligent, obeying of God's laws, should be the matter of the common disdain and hatred of the world; that no men are more generally abhorred, and tossed up and down by impatient men; that great and small, the rulers and the vulgar rabble, in most places of the earth, cannot endure them. To think how the first man that ever was born into the world did hate his own brother, till he proceeded to murder him, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. And, how constantly this horrid, unnatural madness hath succeeded, and raged in the world, from Cain until this day! It is not in vain that the Holy Ghost addeth, in the next words, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you;" implying, that we are apt to marvel at it; as I confess I have oft and greatly done. Methinks, it is so wonderful a plague and stain in nature, that it doth very much to confirm me of the truth of Scripture; of the doctrine of man's fall and original sin, and the necessity of a Reconciler, and of renewing grace.

Distracted, miserable souls! Is it not enough for you to refuse your own salvation, but you must be angry with all that will not imitate you? Is it not

mad enough, and bad enough, to choose damnation, but you must be offended with all that are not of your mind? If you will not believe God, that, without regeneration, conversion, holiness, and a heavenly, spiritual life, there is no salvation to be hoped for (John iii. 3, 5, 6. Matt. xviii. 3. Heb. xii. 14. Rom. viii. 9, 13. 2 Cor. v. 17.) Must we all be unbelievers with you? If you will laugh at hell till you are in it, must we do so too? If God and glory seem less worth to you, than your fleshly pleasure for a time, must we renounce our Christianity and our reason for fear of differing from you? If you dare differ from your Maker, and the Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost, and all the prophets, apostles, and evangelists, and all that ever came to heaven, may not we be bold to differ from you? If you will needs be ungodly, and choose your everlasting wo, be patient with them that have more understanding, and dare not be so hardy as to leap after you into the unquenchable fire: mock not at holiness, if you have no mind to it. Hinder not them that "strive to enter in at the strait gate," if you refuse yourselves. Be not so desirous of company in hell. It will prove no comfort to you, or abatement of your pain.

But, because you have the face to contradict the God of truth, and to reproach that work which he commandeth, and to say, What needs so much ado? when he bids us do it with all our might; I will briefly tell you what you are doing, and show you the ugly face of the scorner, and the filthy hearts of the enemies of holiness, that if it may be, you may loathe yourselves.

1. These enemies of holy diligence deny God with their works and lives, and are practical Atheists; and, it seems, are so near of kin to that wicked one (see 1 John iii. 12.) that they would have all others to do so too. And then, how soon would earth be turned into hell! The case is plain: if God deserves not to be loved and served, with all thy heart, and soul, and might, he is not God. And if thy wealth, or honour, or flesh, or friend, deserveth more of thy love, and care, and diligence, than God, then that is thy God that deserveth best. See now what these deriders of purity and obedience do think of God and of the world.

2. These Cainites do blaspheme the Governor of the world: when he hath given laws to the creatures that he made of nothing, these wretches deride and hate men for obeying them. If God has not commanded that which you oppose, contradict it, and spare not: I would you were much more against that pretended religion, which he commandeth not. But if he has commanded it, and yet you dare revile them as too pure and precise, that would obey it, what do you but charge the King of Saints with making laws that are not to be obeyed! Which must needs imply they are foolish and bad, though made by the most wise and good.

3. These enemies of holiness oppose the practice of the very first principles of religion. For, "he that cometh to God, must believe that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." And it is diligently seeking him that they hate and set themselves against.

4. Do not they judge heaven to be less worth

than earth; when they will do less for it, and would have others to do so too?

5. They would have us all unchristian, and unman ourselves, as if there were no life to come; as if our reason, and all our faculties, were given us in vain. For if they are not given us for greater matters than all the honours and pleasures of the world, they are in vain, or worse; and the life of man is but a dream and misery. Were not a beast less miserable if this were all?

6. How base a pride do these Cainites set on the immortal soul of man, that think it not worth so much ado as the careful obedience of the laws of Christ! Not worth so much as they do themselves for their filthy sins and perishing flesh! But would have us so mad, as to sell heaven and our souls, for a little sinful sloth and ease.

7. These enemies of holiness would have men take their mercies for their hurt, and their greatest blessings for a burden or a plague, and to run into hell to be delivered from them. Why man, dost thou know what holiness is? And what it is to have access to God? I tell thee it is the foretaste of heaven on earth. It is the highest glory, and sweetest delight, and chiefest commodity to the soul. And art thou afraid of having too much of this? What, thou that hast none, (which should make thee tremble,) art thou afraid of having too much? Thou that never fearest too much money, nor too much honour, nor too much health, art thou afraid of too much spiritual health and holiness? What shall be thy desire, if thou loathe and flee from thy felicity?

8. You that are loyal subjects, take heed of these ungodly scorners: for by consequence they would tempt you to despise your King, and make a mock at the obeying of his commands and laws. For if a man persuade you to despise a judge, he implieth that you may despise a constable. No king is so great in comparison of God, as a fly or a worm is to that king. He therefore that would relax the laws of God, and make it seem a needless thing to obey him diligently and exactly, implieth, that obedience to any of the sons of men is much more needless.

And you that are children or servants, take heed of the doctrine of these men: Masters, admit it not into your families. If he be worthy to be scorned as a Puritan or Precisian, that is careful to please and obey the Lord, what scorn do your children and servants deserve, if they will be obedient and pleasing to such as you?

All you that are poor tradesmen, take heed of the consequences of the Cainites' scorns, lest it make you give over the labours of your calling and turn yourselves and families into beggary. For if heaven be not worth your greatest labour, your bodies are not worth the least.

10. These Cainites speak against the awakened consciences, and the confessions of all the world. Whatsoever they may say in the dream of their blind presumption and security, at last, when death hath opened their eyes, they all cry, 'O that we had been saints! O that we might die the death of the righteous, and that our last end might be as his! O that we had spent that time, and care, and labour for our souls, which we have spent on that

which now is gall to our remembrance!' And yet these men will take no warning, but now oppose and deride that course that all the world do wish at last they had been as zealous for as any.

11. To conclude, the Cainite "is of that wicked one," of "his father the devil;" and is his walking, speaking instrument on earth, saying what he himself would say: he is an open enemy of God. For who are his enemies, but the enemies of holiness, of his laws, of our obedience, of his image, and of his saints? And how will Christ deal at last with his enemies? "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." O that they knew, that, foreseeing, they might escape! This is the true, the ugly picture of a Cainite, or enemy of a holy life, that reproacheth serious diligence as a precise and needless thing, when God commandeth us, and death, and the grave, and eternity admonish us to do his work with all our might. Now, consider this, ye that forget God, lest he "tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you."

But of all the opposers of serious holiness in the world, there are none more inexcusable and deplorably miserable, than those that profess themselves Ministers of Christ. Would one believe, that had not known them, that there are such men in the world? Alas! there are too many. Though education, and the laws of the land engage them to preach true doctrine, yet are they false teachers in the application. For they never well learned the

holy and heavenly doctrine which they preach, nor digested it, nor received the power and impress of it upon their hearts; and therefore, retaining their natural corruptions, impiety, and enmity to the life and power, and practice of that doctrine, they indirectly destroy what directly they would seem to build; and preach both for God, and against him; for Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and against them; for godliness, and against it, both in the same sermon. In general, they must needs speak for the word of God, and a holy life; but when they come to the particulars, they secretly reproach it, and condemn the parts, while they commend the whole. In general, they speak well of religious, godly, holy people; but when they meet with them, they hate them, and make them *Precisians*, a sect that is every where spoken against, pestilent fellows, and movers of sedition, as the Apostles were accused; and any thing that malice can invent, to make them odious: and what they cannot prove, they will closely intimate, in the false application of their doctrines, describing them so as may induce the hearers to believe that they are a company of self-conceited hypocrites; factious, proud, disobedient, turbulent, peevish, affecting singularity, desiring to engross the reputation of godliness to themselves, but secretly as bad as others. And when they have thus represented them to the ignorant sort of people, they have made the way of godliness odious, and sufficiently furnished miserable souls with prejudice and dislike; so that, because the persons are thus made hateful to them, all serious diligence for heaven, all tenderness of conscience, and fear of

sinning, all heavenly discourse, and serious preaching, reading, or praying, are also made odious, for their sakes; or, hearing so ill of the persons, and seeing that these are the things wherein they differ from others, they reduce their judgment of their practices to their foresettled judgment of the persons. When their diligence in their families, in prayer and instructions, in reading, and fruitful improvement of the Lord's day, or any other actions of strictness and holy industry, are mentioned, these ungodly ministers are ready to blot them with some open calumnies, or secret reproaches, or words of suspicion, to vindicate their own unholy lives, and make people believe that serious piety is faction and hypocrisy. The black tincture of their minds, and the design and drift of their preaching, may be perceived in their jeers, and slanderous intimations against the most diligent servants of the Lord. The controverted truths that such maintain, they represent as errors; their unavoidable errors, they represent as heresy; their duties they represent as faults, and their frailties as enormous crimes; they feign them to be guilty of the things that never entered into their thoughts; and if some that have professed godliness, be guilty of greater crimes, they would make men believe that the rest are such, and that the family of Christ is to be judged of by a Judas; and the scope is to intimate that their profession is either culpable or needless.

Regeneration they would make to be but the entrance into the church by baptism; and any further conversion, than the leaving off some gross sins, and taking up some heartless forms of duty, to be

but a fancy, or unnecessary thing. And they would draw poor people to believe, that if they be born again sacramentally of water, they may be saved, though they be not born again by the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Being strangers themselves to the mystery of regeneration, and to the life of faith, and a heavenly conversation, and to the loving and serving God with all their soul and might; they first endeavour to quiet themselves with a belief that these are but fancies, or unnecessary, and then to deceive the people with that by which they have first deceived themselves.

And it is worthy your observation, what it is in religion, that these formal hypocrites are against. There are scarce any words so sound or holy, but they can bear them, if they be but deprived of their life; nor scarce any duty, if it be but dead, but they can endure. But it is the spirit and life of all religion which they cannot bear. As a body differeth from a carcass, not by the parts, but by the life; so there is a certain life in preaching, and prayer, and all other acts of worship, which is perceived by several sorts of hearers. The godly perceive it to their edification and delight; for here it is that they are quickened and encouraged. Life begetteth life, as fire kindleth fire. The ungodly often perceive it to their vexation, if not to their conviction and conversion.

This life in preaching, praying, discipline, reproof, and conference, is that which biteth, and galleth, and disquieteth their consciences. And this they kick and rail against; this is the thing that will not let them sleep quietly in their sin and

misery, but is calling and jogging them to awake, and will not let them sin in peace, but will either convert them, or torment them before their time. It is the life of religion, that the hypocrite is destitute of; and the life that he is most against. A painted fire burneth not. A dead lion biteth not. The carcass of an enemy is not formidable. Let the words of that sermon that most offendeth them, be separated from the life, and put into a homily, and said or read in a formal, drowsy, or a schoolboy's tone, and they can bear it, and commend it. Let the same words of prayer, which now they like not, be said over as a lifeless customary form, and they can like it well. I speak not against the use of forms, but the abuse of them; not against the body, but the carcass. Let forms themselves be used by a spiritual, serious man, in a spiritual, serious manner, with the interposition of any quickening exhortations, or occasional passages, that tend to keep them waking and attentive, and make them feel what you mean and are about; and you shall see they love not such animated forms. It is the living Christian, and lively worship, and serious spiritual religion, which they hate: kill it, and they can bear it. Let the picture of my enemy be nearer and comelier than his person was, and I can endure it in my bed-chamber, better than himself in the meanest dress. It is the living Christians, that in all parts of the world are chiefly persecuted. Let them be once dead, and dead-hearted hypocrites themselves will honour them, especially at a sufficient distance: they will destroy the living saints, and keep holy days for the dead ones. "Wo to

you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" The dog that will not meddle with the dead creature, will pursue the living; and when he sees it stir no more, will leave it. Christianity, without seriousness, is not Christianity; and therefore not liable to the hatred of its enemies, as such. Say any thing, and do any thing, how strict soever, if you will but act it as a player on the stage, or do it coldly, slightly, and as if you were but in jest, you may have their approbation. But it is this life, and seriousness, and worshipping God in spirit and truth, that convinceth them that they themselves are lifeless, and therefore troubleth their deceitful peace, and therefore must not have their friendship. If it were the mere bulk of duty that they are weary of, how comes it to pass that a Papist at his psalter, beads, and mass books, can spend more hours without much weariness or opposition, than we can do in serious worship? Turn all but into words, and beads, and canonical hours, and days, and shows, and ceremony, and you may be as religious as you will, and be righteous overmuch; and few will hate, or reproach, or persecute you among them, as too precise or strict. But living Christians and living worship, come

among them like fire, that burneth them, and makes them smart, with a "word that is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

And the enmity of the Cainites may teach the Christian what he should be, and wherein his excellency lieth. It is life and seriousness that your enemies hate: and therefore it is life and seriousness that you must above all maintain; though dead-hearted hypocrites never so much oppose and contradict you.

O sirs, they are no trifles, but the greatest things that God hath set before you in his word, and called you out to prosecute and possess; and your time of seeking them is short, and therefore you have no time for trifles, nor any to lose in idleness and sloth. And of all men, preachers should be most sensible of this. If they were not against serious holiness in others, it is double wickedness for such as they to be against it in themselves. They are great things that they have to study and to speak of; and such as call for the greatest seriousness, and reverence, and gravity in the speaker, and condemn all trifling in matter or in manner. A man that is sent of Christ to run for an immortal crown, or to direct others in such a race, to save his own, or other men's souls, from endless misery, should be ashamed to fill up his time with trifles, or to be slight and cold about such great and weighty things. All the heart, and soul, and might, is little enough for matters of such unspeakable importance. When I hear

that preachers or people spend their time in little, impertinent, fruitless things, that do but divert them from the great business of their lives, or dally with the greatest matters, rather than use them with a seriousness suitable to their importance, I often think of the words of Seneca, the serious moralist, as shaming the hypocrisy of such trifling preachers and professors of the Christian faith: "You compose copious words, and tie hard knots by curious questions; and you say, O these are acute things! What is more acute than the peel of corn? And yet what is it good for? Subtlety itself makes some things unprofitable and ineffectual.

"Leave these toys or fooleries to poets, whose business it is to delight the ear, and to compose a pleasant fable. But they that mean to heal men's understandings, and retain credibility among men, and to bring into men's minds the remembrance of their duties, must speak seriously, and do their business with all their might.

"He would justly, by all, be taken for a madman, who, when the town expecteth to be stormed by the enemies, and others are busy at work for their defence, will sit idle, proposing some curious questions. And shall not I be taken for a madman, if I should busy myself about such things, that am now besieged? What shall I do? Death pursueth me; life fleeth from me; teach me something against these; make death not dreadful to me, or life not to fly from me. If we had much time, we should sparingly lay it out, that it might suffice for necessary things: but now what a madness is it, to learn things needless or superfluous, in so great a

scarcity of time! Measure thy age: it is not enough for so many things. Leave this learned play to philosophers: a gallant business! They call us to syllables, and debase and depress the mind by learning such little trivial things, and make philosophy rather to seem a matter of difficulty, than great. Socrates, that called back all philosophy to manners, did call this the highest wisdom, to distinguish good and evil."

Did a Seneca see, by the light of nature, so much of the necessity of seriousness and diligence, about matters of the soul? And so much of the madness of spending words and time on trifles? And yet shall there be found a man among professed Christians, and among the preachers of faith and holiness, that pleads for trifling, and scorns at seriousness, and counts them moderate and wise, that a heathen brands as toyish and distracted?

What is it that clouds the glory of Christianity, and keeps so great a part of the world in heathenism and infidelity, but this, that among Christians there are so few that are Christians indeed? And those few are so obscured by the multitude of formal, trifling, hypocrites, that Christianity is measured and judged of by the lives of those that are no Christians. Religion is a thing to be demonstrated, and honoured, and commended by practice: words alone are ineffectual to represent its excellency to so blind a world, that must know by feeling, having lost their sight. In our professed faith we mount unto the heavens, and leave poor unbelievers wallowing in the dirt. O what a transcendent, inconceivable glory do we profess to expect with God in eternity; and

what manner of persons should they be, in all holy conversation and godliness, that look for such a life as this! How base should they esteem those transitory things, that are the food and felicity of the sensual world! How patiently should they undergo contempt and scorn, and whatsoever man can inflict upon them! How studiously should they devote and refer all their time, and strength, and wealth, and interest, to this their glorious, blessed end! How seriously should they speak of, and how industriously should they seek for, such sure, such near, such endless joys! Did professed Christians more exactly conform their hearts and lives to their profession and holy rule, their lives would confute the reproaches of their enemies, and command a reverent and awful estimation from observers, and do more to convince the unbelieving world of the truth and dignity of the Christian faith, than all the words of the most subtle disputants. Christianity being an affecting practical science, must practically and affectionately be declared, according to its nature. Arguments do but paint it out; and pictures do no more make known its excellency, than the picture of meet and drink makes known their sweetness. When a doctrine so holy, is visibly exemplified, and and lives, and walks, and works, in serious Christians, before the world, either this or nothing, will convince them and constrain them, to glorify our Lord, and say, that God is among us or in us of a truth. But it is unchristian lives that darken the glory of the Christian faith. When men, that profess such glorious hopes, are as sordidly earthly, and sensual, and ambitious, and impotent, and impatient, as other men, they seem but fantastical dissemblers.

And yet shall there be found such a perfidious wretch under the heavens of God, as a professed minister of Christ, that shall subtly or openly labour to make an exact, and holy, and heavenly conversation, a matter of reproach and scorn? And that, under pretence of reproving the sins of hypocrites and schismatics, shall make the exactest conformity to the Christian rule, and most faithful obedience to the Almighty Sovereign, seem to be but hypocrisy or self-conceitedness, or needless trouble, if not the way of sedition, and public trouble, and turning all things upside down? That cannot reprove sin, without malicious insinuating slanders, or suspicions against the holy law, and holy life, that are as contrary to sin, as life to death, as health to sickness, and as light to darkness?

For any man, especially any professed Christian, any where to oppose or scorn godliness, is a dreadful sign, as well as a heinous sin: but for a preacher of godliness to oppose and scorn godliness, and that in the pulpit, while he pretends to promote it, and plead for it in the name of Christ, is a sin that should strike the heart of man with horror to conceive of.

Though I cannot subscribe myself to that passage in the second part of the tenth Homily, Tom. ii. page 150, (however, I very much love and honour the book of Homilies,) yet for their sakes that not only can subscribe to it, but would have all kept out of the ministry that cannot, and that take it for that doctrine of the church of England which they will believe and preach, I will recite it to the terror of the guilty, not to drive to despair, but to awake

them, or to shame them for their opposition to the ways of godliness.

Expounding Psalm i. 1.—" Blessed is the man that hath not walked after the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful:" having shown who are the ungodly and the sinners, he addeth these words:—" The third sort he calleth scorners; that is, a sort of men whose hearts are so stuffed with malice, that they are not contented to dwell in sin, and to lead their lives in all kinds of wickedness, but also they do contemn and scorn in others all godliness, true religion, all honesty and virtue. Of the two first sorts of men, I will not say but they may take repentance, and be converted unto God. Of the third sort, I think I may, without danger of God's judgment, pronounce, that never any yet were converted unto God by repentance; but continued still in their abominable wickedness, heaping up to themselves damnation against the day of God's inevitable judgment." Though I dare not say but some such have repented, yet let the scorners that believe this, remember that they subscribe the sentence of their own condemnation.

Though I look upon this sort of the enemies of holiness as those that are as unlikely to be recovered and saved, as almost any people in the world, except apostates and malicious blasphemers of the Holy Ghost, yet in compassion to the people and themselves, I shall plead the cause of God with their consciences, and try what light can do with their understandings, and the terrors of the Lord with their hardened hearts.

1. A preacher of the Gospel should much excel the people in understanding: and therefore this sin is greater in them than other men: what means, what light do they sin against? Either thou knowest the necessity of striving for salvation with the greatest diligence, or thou dost not. If not, what a sin and shame is it to undertake the sacred office of the ministry, while thou knowest not the things that are necessary to salvation, and that which every infant in the faith doth know? But if thou dost know it, how dost thou make shift maliciously to oppose it, without feeling the beginnings of hell in thy conscience? When it is thy work to read the Scriptures, and meditate on them, dost thou not read thy doom, and meditate terror? How canst thou choose but perceive that the scope of the Word of God is contrary to the bent of thy affections and suggestions? Yea, what is more evident by the light of Nature, than that God and our salvation cannot be regarded with too much holy seriousness, exactness, and industry? Should not the best things be best loved? and the greatest matters have our greatest care? And is there any thing to be compared with God and our eternal state? O what overwhelming subjects are these to a sober and considerate mind! what toys are all things in comparison of them! And yet dost thou make light of them, and also teach men so to do, as if there were something else that better deserved men's greatest care and diligence than they? What, a preacher, and not a believer? Or, a believer, and yet not see enough in the matters of eternity to en-

gage all our powers of soul and body against all the world that should stand in competition?

2. Is it not sinful and terrible enough, to be thyself in a carnal, unrenewed state? and to be without the Spirit and life of Christ, but thou must be so cruel as to make others miserable also? "But to the wicked, saith God, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes? or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?" "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach the same, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

3. What an aggravation is it of thy impiety and soul-murder, that thou art bound by office to teach men that life of holiness which thou opposest, and to persuade them to that with all thy might, which thou endeavourest closely and cunningly to disgrace! And wilt thou be a traitor to Christ in the name of a messenger and preacher of the Gospel? Wilt thou engage thyself to promote his interest, and to use all thy skill and power to build men up in holiness and obedience; and when thou hast done this, wilt thou disgrace and hinder it? Dost thou take on thee to go on the message of Christ, and then speak against him? We do not find that Judas dealt thus with him: when he sent him as he did other preachers, we read not that he preached against him. O let not my soul be numbered with such men in the day of the Lord! It will be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for the refusers of the word and

grace of Christ. What then will be the doom of the opposers? and, above all, of those treacherous opposers, that pretend themselves to propagate and promote them?

If the wit and malice of Satan's instruments were sharpened against the ways and servants of the Lord, it belongs to you to plead Christ's cause, and shame these absurd, unreasonable gainsayers, and stop the mouth of impious contradiction; and will you join with the gainsayers, and secretly or openly say as they? Who should confound the deriders of a holy life but you? Who should lay open the excellencies of Christ, the glory of heaven, the terrors of the Lord, and all other obligations to the most serious religiousness, but you that have undertaken it as your calling and employment? If any man in the parish were so atheistical and brutish, as to think God unworthy of our dearest love, our most exact obedience, and most laborious service, who should display this atheist's folly, but you that are doubly, as Christians and ministers, obliged to defend the honour of your Lord? If any of the people should fall into such a dream or dotage, as to question the necessity of our utmost diligence in our preparations for eternal life, who should awake them by lifting up their voices as a trumpet, and help to recover their understandings, but you that are the watchmen, and know their blood will be required at your hands, if you give them not loud and timely warning? If any subtle, malicious servants of the devil, should plead against the necessity of holiness, and dissuade the people from serving God with all their might, who should be ready to confirm the weak, and

strengthen and encourage them that are thus assaulted, and help to keep up their zeal and forwardness, but you that are leaders in the army of the Lord? Is it not a holy God that you are engaged to serve? and a holy church in which you have your station? And a communion of saints in which you have undertaken to administer the holy things of God? Have you not read what was done to Nadab and Abihu, when Moses told Aaron, "This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before the people I will be glorified?" Is it not a holy law and gospel which you publish? You have undertaken to warn the slothful, the sensual, the worldly, and the profane, "that they strive to enter in at the strait gate, and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." And to give diligence to make sure their calling and election. And to give all diligence in adding virtue to their faith. And with all diligence to keep their hearts. And are you the men that would quench their zeal, and destroy the holy diligence which you should preach? The Lord touch your hearts, and recover you in time, or how woful will it be with such hardened hypocrites, that in the light, and in the family and livery, and under his standard and colours, dare prove traitors and enemies to the Lord?

4. And what an addition is it to your guilt, that you speak against God in his own name? By office you are to deliver his message, and speak to the people in his name, and in his stead, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;

and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And dare thou before the sun, and under the heavens of God, and in his hearing, persuade men that the most holy God is against holiness, and the King of Saints is an adversary to sanctity? and that he that made his holy law, is against the most exact obeying of it? Dare you prefix, "Thus saith the Lord," to so impious a speech as, It is vain to serve the Lord? what needs there so much ado for your salvation? Dare you go to men as from the Lord, and say—You are too careful and diligent in his service? Less ado may serve thy turn. What needs this fervour, and redeeming time! this is but puritanism or preciseness. It is better to do as the most, and venture your souls without so much ado. Who could at last hold up his face, or stand before the dreadful tribunal, that should be found in the guilt of such a crime! What, to put God in the similitude of Satan, and describe the Most Holy as the enemy of holiness! and make him plead against himself, and disgrace his own image, and dissuade men from that which he himself hath made of necessity to their salvation! What viler blasphemy can be uttered!

5. And it aggravateth your sin, that your relation obligeth you to the most tender affections to your people: and yet that you should seduce them to damnation. For the nurse to poison them; for the parents to cut the children's throats, is worse than for an enemy to do it. If the devil, our professed

enemy, should himself appear to us, and say—'Prepare not so seriously for death: be not so strict, and diligent, and holy;' it were not, in many respects so bad, as for you to do it, that should help to save us from his snares.

You that profess yourselves their fathers! that should travail in birth till Christ be formed in your people's hearts! that should love your people as your own bowels, and succour the weak, and pity the wicked, and stick at no labour, suffering, or cost, that might advance their holiness, and further their salvation; for you to tempt men into a careless life, and turn them out of the holy way, is an aggravated cruelty. It is worse for the shepherd to destroy us than the wolf. Read Ezek. xxxiii. and xxxiv.

6. Are you not ashamed thus to contradict yourselves? What can you find to preach from the word of God, that tends not to this holy diligence which you are against? How can you make shift to preach an hour, and not acquaint them with the duty and necessity of seeking God with all their might? Do you not tell them, that "except they be converted and new born, they shall not enter into the kingdom of God?" And "that without holiness none shall see the Lord?" And "that if they live after the flesh, they shall die?" And "that except their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven?" And will you, in your application, or private discourses, unsay all this again, and give God and yourselves the lie? and let people see, that the pulpit is to you but as a stage, and that you believe not what you speak?

7. Consider, that your place and calling make you the most successful servants of the devil, and so the most bloody murderers of souls, while you give your judgment against a strict and heavenly life. For a drunkard in an alehouse to mock the minister, and rail at serious religion, is less regarded by sober men, and small advantage to his Master's cause; nay, the wickedness of his life is so great a shame to his judgment, that it inclines many to think well of those that he speaks against. But when a man that pretends to learning and understanding, and to be himself a pastor of the Church, and preacher of the mysteries of Christ, shall make them odious that are most careful of their souls, and most exact in pleasing God, and shall make all serious diligence for heaven to seem but intemperate zeal and self-conceitedness; what a snare is here for the perdition of the ignorant! they that are naturally averse from holiness, and are easily persuaded to think that to be unnecessary or bad, which seems so much above them and against them, will be much confirmed in their mistakes and misery, when they hear their teachers speak without them, the same that Satan by his suggestions doth within them. This turns a trembling sinner into a hardened scorner: he that before went under the daily correction of his conscience, for neglecting God, and omitting holy duties, and living to the flesh, grows bold and fearless when he hears the preacher disgrace the stricter, purer way. By that time he hath heard awhile the fear of God derided as preciseness, and a tender conscience reproached as a scrupulous foolish thing, his conscience grows more pliable to his lusts, and

hath little more to say against them. When God's own professed ministers, that should be wiser and better than the people, are against this zeal and industry for heaven, the people will soon think, that at least it is tolerable in them: and they will sooner learn to deride a saint from a sermon, or discourse of a preacher or a learned man, than from the scorns or talk of hundreds of the ignorant. And wilt thou teach them to hate godliness, who hast undertaken before the righteous God, to teach them to practise it? He that dispraises it, though under other names, and represents it as odious, though masked with the title of some odious vice, doth indeed endeavour to make men hate it. And what a terrible account wilt thou have to make, when the seduction and transgression of all these sinners shall be charged upon thee! When Christ shall say to the haters, deriders, and opposers of his holy ways and servants, —"Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me." How durst you scorn the image of your Maker? and hate the saints, whose communion you professed to believe; and deride and oppose that serious holiness without which you had no hope of being saved? If then the sinners become your accusers, and say, 'Lord, we thought it had been but unnecessary preciseness, and that serious Christians had been but self-conceited factious hypocrites, and that lip-service with a common worldly life might have served the turn; we heard our preachers represent such strict and zealous men, as turbulent, seditious, and refractory, as odious and not as imitable: their application was against them: their discourse derided them: of them we

learned it: we thought they were wiser and better than we: of whom should we learn but of our teachers?' Wo to the teachers that ever they were born, that must be then found guilty of this crime.

If Adam's excuse was Eve's accusation, "The woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat," and the woman's excuse did charge the serpent, "The serpent beguiled me and I did eat," freed not the accusers; how will it load you, when your people should say, 'The teachers that we thought thou gavest us, did teach us and go before us in setting against this holy diligence; and we did but learn of them and follow them!

8. Are not the people backward enough to the serving of God with all their might, unless you hinder them? Are not the corrupted hearts of lapsed men averse enough to the matters of salvation, but you must make them worse? If you had to do with the best and holiest person in the world that walketh with God in the most heavenly conversation, he would tell you that his dull and backward heart hath no need of clogs, and drags, and discouragements, but of all the help that can be afforded him, to quicken him up to greater diligence. The most zealous lament that they are so cold; the most heavenly lament that they are so earthly, and so strange to heaven; the most laborious lament that they are so slothful; and the most fruitful believers, that they are so unprofitable; and those that are most watchful of their words and deeds, that they are so careless; and those that most diligently redeem their time, lament that they lose so much; and those that walk most accurately and exactly, that they are so

loose, and keep no closer to the rule. And yet darest thou increase the backwardness of the ungodly? Will not their carnal interests and lusts serve turn to keep them from a holy life? Is not Satan strong enough of himself? Will not the common distaste of godliness in the world, sufficiently prejudice and avert them without thy helps? Do you see your people so forward to do too much for heaven, that you must pull them back? Cannot souls be damned without your furtherance? or is it a desirable work? and will it pay you for your cost and labour? The way is up hill; the best of us are weak, and frequently ready to sit down. A thousand impediments are cast before us by Satan and the world, to make us linger till the time be past; and many a charm of pleasure and diversion to make us sleep till the door be shut. And ministers are sent to keep us waking, and take us by the hand, and lead us on, and remove impediments; and shall they set in with the enemy, and be our chief hinderers? O treacherous guides! O miserable helps! Are not our dark understandings, or earthly, dull, and backward hearts, our passions and troubled affections, our appetites and sensual inclinations, our natural strangeness and averseness to God, and heaven, and holiness, enough to hinder us without you? Are not all the temptations of the devil, the allurements of the flesh and world, the impediments of poverty and riches, of flattery and of frowns, of friends and foes; are not all these enough to cool and dull us, and keep us from serving God too much, and being too careful and diligent for our souls, but teachers themselves must be our impediments and

snares? Now the Lord deliver our souls from such impediments, and his Church from such unhappy guides!

9. Consider whom thou imitatest in this. Is it Christ, or Satan? Christ calleth men to strive, to labour, to seek first, to watch, to pray always, and not wax faint. Luke xii. 24. John vi. 27. Matt. vi. 33. and xxv. 13. Luke xviii. 1.

The apostles call men to be "fervent in spirit serving the Lord; to be a peculiar people zealous of good works; to pray continually; to be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of him that hath called us, and offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." "To fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold upon eternal life." "To serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." "To be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord." And dare you gainsay the Lord and his apostles, and concur with Satan, and the Pharisees, and enemies of Christ?

10. You do your worst to make the sacred office of the ministry become contemptible, as Eli's sons did. Poor people that cannot sufficiently distinguish the doctrine from the application, the office from the person, the use from the abuse, will be tempted to run from the ordinances of God, and think the worse of others for your sakes, and suspect all their food, because you mix such poison in it. And the more holy and necessary the office and work are, the greater is your sin in corrupting them, or making them suspected or abhorred.

Consider soberly these things, and then go on and speak against a life of holy diligence if you dare.

I know you will say it is not godliness, but singularity or humour, or disobedience, or hypocrisy, or faction, that you oppose: and perhaps you will instance in some that are guilty of some of these, or seem so at the least.

1. But I do here solemnly profess that I hate these crimes as well as you: and that it is not any part of my intention to plead for intemperance, disobedience in lawful things, for schisms, or factions, or any irregularity: and this I here put in against those that are disposed to misunderstand and misreport us, and leave it on record to prove them slanderers, that shall accuse me of defending any such thing. And I do protest against those on the other side, that will fetch encouragement for any transgression from my necessary plea for the holy industry and vigilance of believers. And moreover, I do profess that it is only the opposers of holiness that I mean in this defence, and have not the least intent to intimate that any others are guilty of that crime that are not. But having premised this protestation, to prevent mistakes and false reports, I answer now to the guilty.

2. If it be crimes only that you are against, deliver yourself so, as may not lay reproach or suspicion on godliness, which is most opposite to all crimes. Cannot you preach against divisions, disobedience, or any other sin, without any scornful intimations or reflections against men's diligent serving of the Lord?

3. Why do not you commend those that are not

liable to your accusations, and encourage them in holiness, and draw others to imitate them? And why do you not commend the good where you discommend the evil that is mixed with it.

4. Shall health and life be made a scorn, because there are few but have some distemper or disease? Shall Christianity and holiness be secretly reproached, because all Christians have some fault to be accused of? If men be faulty, you should persuade them to be more strict and diligent, and not less: it is for want of watchfulness and strictness that they sin. Nothing is more contrary to their faults than holiness. There is no other way for their full reformation. And therefore all true humble Christians are ready to confess their faultiness themselves: but so far are they from thinking the worse of piety for it, that it is one great reason that moveth them to go on, and to read, and hear, and pray, and meditate, and do so much that they may get more strength against their faults. Must they think ill of food, and physic, and exercise, because they are infirm? All faithful ministers tell their people plainly of their sins (so far as they are acquainted with them) as well as you: but they do it not in a way reproachful to their holy diligence: they do not therefore call them off from godliness, nor tempt them to be less in the use of means, but more, by how much their need is greater. A holy heart, and a malignant heart, will show their difference in the reproving of the same fault. The one layeth all the odium on the vice, and honoureth the holy obedience of the saints. The other fasteneth his sting upon the godly, and, under pretence of dishonouring their faults, doth

seek to fasten the dishonour on their holiness. And those that are so minded, will never want occasion or pretence, for the worst that Satan would have them say. The church will never be without some hypocrites, and scandal, nor the best without some faults and passions; nor the holiest action without some mixture of human frailty and infirmity; nor will the very goodness and holiness of the action, be free from plausible calumnies and scorns, while the wit and venom of the serpent are in the heads and hearts of wicked men.

How easy is it to put a name of ignominy upon every person, and every duty! To charge any man with hypocrisy, or pride! To take the wisest man for self-conceited, because he is not of the accuser's mind! To call our obedience to God, by the name of disobedience unto man, when man forbids it, as in the case of the three witnesses, Dan. iii. and of Daniel himself, for praying in his house, Dan. vi. though they confessed they had nothing else against him! To call God's truth by the name of heresy, and heresy by the name of truth! To charge all with schism that dare not subject their souls to the usurpation and arrogant impositions of the sons of pride, that have neither authority nor ability to govern us as the Papists deal by the greatest part of the christian world! To lay snares for men's consciences, and then accuse them for falling into those snares! To make new articles of faith, till they have transcended the capacity of divine and rational belief, and then condemn us for not believing them! To make laws for the church, unnecessary in their own opinion, and sinful in other men's, and com-

mand things which they know that others think the Lord forbids, and then load them with the sufferings and reproaches of the disobedient, turbulent, heretical, schismatical, or seditious! To call men factious, if they will not be of their faction! and sectaries, if they will not unreasonably subject their souls to them, and join with an imperious sect against the Catholic unity and simplicity! All which the Romanists practise upon the church of Christ. How easy, but how unreasonable, and yet how irresistible is all this! How easy it is to call a meeting of sober Christians, for prayer and mutual edification, such as that was, Acts xii. 12. by the name of a factious, schismatical conventicle, and a meeting of drunkards, or gamesters, by a more gentle, less disgraceful name! To say a man becomes a preacher, when he modestly reproves another for his sins, or charitably exhorts him in order to his salvation, or gives any necessary plain instruction to his family, for whom he must give account! Believe it, it will be a poor excuse to any man, that becomes an enemy to the diligence of a saint, that he could thus cloak his malice, and clothe a saint with the vizor of a hypocrite, and the rags of any odious sect.

If the Pharisees were to be believed, it was not they, but Christ that was the hypocrite: nor was it the Son of God, but an enemy to Cæsar, and a blasphemer, that they put to death. But will not Christ know his sheep, though he find them torn in a wolf's skin? You say is is turbulent Precisians that you strike; but what if Christ find but one of the least of his brethren bleeding by it? It is but hypocrites or schismatics that you reproach; but if

Christ find an humble, serious Christian suffering by your abuse, and that you are to answer it, I would not be in your place for all the greatness and honour that you shall have before your everlasting shame. If Tertullus accuse a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition, and Christ find a holy laborious apostle in bonds and suffering by it, it is not his names that will excuse him, and make an apostle, or persecution to be another thing.

To return to the endangered flocks: Look upwards, sirs, and think whether heaven be worth our labour. Look downwards, and think whether earth be more worthy of it. Lay up your treasures where you must dwell for ever. If that be here, then scrape, and flatter, and get all that you can: but if it be not here, but in another life, then hearken to your Lord, and lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven, and there let your very hearts be set. And, upon the peril of everlasting misery, hearken not to any man that will tempt you from a diligent holy life. It is a serious business, deal seriously in it; and be not laughed or mocked out of heaven, by the flouts of a distracted sensual Atheist. If any of them will pretend to sobriety and wisdom, and undertake to prove that God should not be loved and served, and your salvation sought with all your might, and with greater care and diligence than any earthly thing, procure me a sober conference with that man, and try whether I shall not prove him to be a befooled servant of the devil, and a mischievous enemy of your salvation, and his own. O that we might have but sober debates, instead of jeers, and scorns, and railing, with this sort of men! How

quickly should we show you, that they must renounce the Scripture, and renounce Christianity, and (if that be nothing with them) that they must renounce God, and renounce right reason, and unman themselves, if they will renounce a holy, heavenly life, and blame them that make it their principal business in the world to prepare for the world to come.

But if they will not be entreated to such a sober conference, will you that hear them, if you care what becomes of you, but come to us, and hear what we can say for a holy life, before you hearken to them; and let your souls have fair play, and show that you have so much love to yourselves, as not to cast away salvation at the derision of a fool, before you have heard the other side.—If I make not good the strictest laws of God Almighty, against the most subtle cavils of any of the instruments of Satan, then tell me that infidels or epicures are in the right. Compare their words with the words of God. Consider well but that one text, and tell me whether it suits with their opinions: "Seeing all these things must be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all manner of holy conversation and godliness; looking for, and hastening to, the coming of the day of God?" Did these words but sink into your hearts, the next time you should hear any man reproach a holy, heavenly life, it would, perhaps, make you think of the words of St. Paul to such another: "O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the the right ways of the Lord?"

And if holiness be evil spoken of by them that never tried it, what wonder! Christ hath foretold us that it must be so: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you," &c. "They think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot; speaking evil of you, who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and dead. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory, and of God, resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified." Seneca himself often telleth us, that among the heathen, virtue was a derision: so far is the nature of man degenerated. The question is not, what you are called, or taken to be, but what you are? Inwardly consider of thyself, and judge not what thou art by the words of others, for the most part, good men are called fools and blockheads. Let me be so derided: the reproaches of the ignorant, or unskilful, must be patiently heard, and this contempt of one that followeth virtue, must be contemned. Yea, it is the highest honour to be content to be accounted bad, that we may not be so; and the greatest trial whether we be indeed sincere, to be put to it, to be either accounted hypocrites, or to be such. Methinks I can scarce too oft recite that excellent say-

ing of Seneca, "No man seems to set a higher price on virtue; no man seems to be more devoted to it, than he that hath lost the reputation of being a good man, lest he should lose his conscience."

But perhaps you will ask, May not a man be righteous overmuch? as is intimated, Eccles. vii. 16.

I answer, It is making a man's self overwise or righteous, that is there reproved. And no doubt, but, 1. Many take on them, or make themselves more wise and righteous than they are; that is, are hypocrites. 2. As righteousness is taken materially and in common estimation, so a man may be too righteous. He may be too rigorous; which is called justice; and too much in grief, or care, or trouble, and too much in any outward act that goeth under the name of duty. But it is not then truly and formally duty and righteousness, but sin. As to fast to the disabling the body for God's service. To pray when we should hear; to hear when we should be about some greater work of mercy or necessity: to neglect our outward labour and calling on pretence of religion: to set up sacrifice against, or before mercy: to sorrow when we should rejoice: to meditate and fear, and grieve, beyond what the brain can bear, till it distracts us: this is called being righteous overmuch: as also to make us a religion of our own inventions, and to overdo with will-worship and the traditions of men, as the Pharisees and Papists. But indeed this is not righteousness, but sin. To be formally overmuch righteous, is a contradiction, and impossible. For to go beyond the rule is unrighteousness: and to do too much, is to go beyond the rule. Unless you dare imagine,

that God hath erred, and the rule itself is over strict, and the law is unrighteous: but then how shall God judge the world? saith the apostle. "Shall not the Judge of all the world do righteously?" Nay, how then should he be God?

And is there any thing now left but ignorance or wickedness to stand up against thy speedy diligence? Away then with thy delays and slothfulness. If thou wilt serve God with all thy might, let it be seen; if thou wilt be a Christian indeed, let deeds declare it. Christianity is not a dead opinion. If really thou live in hope of heaven, such hopes will make thee stir for the attainment. Why standest thou idle, when thou art born for work, and all thy faculties are given thee for work, and thou art redeemed for work? (for the evangelical work.) If thou art sanctified, thou hast the Spirit of Christ, a quickening, working principle within thee: which way canst thou look, but thou mayest see that which would shame a slothful soul, and fire a cold and frozen heart, and call thee up to a speedy industry? what quickening words shalt thou find in Scripture, if thou wilt but bring thy heart thither, as one that is willing to be quickened! what powerful commands, what promises, what threatenings, what holy examples of exceeding diligence of Christ and his apostles! See how the godly about thee are at work, though the world oppose them and deride them! how earnestly they pray! how carefully they walk! how sadly they complain that they are no better! And hast thou not an immortal soul to save or lose as well as they? See what a stir the proud, ambitious person makes for less than nothing! What

a stir the covetous and the voluptuous make for a sweetened draught of mortal poison! And shall we be idle that are engaged for heaven? Is it reasonable that we should do less for God and our salvation, than they do for sinful pleasure to damnation?

You cannot mock them out of their pride or covetousness: and shall they mock thee out of thy religion, and thy hopes of heaven? All the commands, and promises, and threatenings of God, the most powerful preaching that, as it were, sets open heaven and hell to them, do not prevail with fleshly men, to leave the most sordid and unmanly sin: and shall the words or frowns of creeping dust prevail with thee against the work for which thou livest in the world, when thou hast still at hand unanswerable arguments from God, from thyself, from heaven and hell, to put thee on? Were it but for thy life, or the life of thy children, friend, yea, or enemy, or for the quenching of a fire in thy house, or in the town, wouldst thou not stir and do thy best? And wilt thou be idle when eternal life lies on it? Let Satan bawl against thee by his instruments. Let senseless sinners talk awhile of they know not what, till God hath made them change their note. These are not matters for a man much to observe, that is engaged for an endless life. O what are these to the things that thou art called to prosecute? Hold on then, Christians, in the work that you have begun. Do it prudently, and do it universally. Take it together, works of piety, justice, and charity: but do it now without delay, and do it seriously with your might. I know not what cloud of darkness hath seized on those men's minds that speak against

this, or what deadly damp hath seized on their hearts, that hath so benumbed and unmanned them.

For my own part, though I have long lived in a sense of the preciousness of time, and have not been wholly idle in the world; yet, when I have the deepest thoughts of the great everlasting consequence of my work, and of the uncertainty and shortness of my time, I am even amazed to think that my heart can be so slow and senseless, as to do no more in such a case. The Lord knows, and my conscience knows, that my slothfulness is so much my shame and admiration, that I am astonished to think that my resolutions are no stronger, my affections no livelier, and my labour and diligence no greater, when God is the commander, and his love the encourager, and his wrath the spur, and heaven or hell must be the issue. O, what lives should all of us live, that have things of such unspeakable consequence on our hands, if our hearts were not almost dead within us! Let who will speak against such a life, it shall be my daily grief and moan, that I am so dull, and do so little. I know that our works do not profit the Almighty, nor bear any proportion with his reward; nor can they stand in his sight, but as accepted in the Lord our righteousness, and perfumed by the odour of his merits. But I know they are necessary, and they are sweet. Without the holy employment of our faculties, this life will be but a burden or a dream, and the next an inexpressible misery. O, therefore, that I had more of the love of God, that my soul could get but nearer to him, and move more swiftly upward by faith and love! O that I had more of that

holy life, and active diligence, which the serpentine Cainish nature doth abhor, though I had with it the scorns of all about me, and though they made me, as they once did better men, "as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things!" O that I had more of this derided diligence, and holy converse with the Lord, though "my name was cast out as an evil-doer," and I were spit at and buffetted by those that do now but secretly reproach! Might I more closely follow Christ in holiness, why should I grudge to bear his cross, and to be used as he was used? Knowing, that "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him; and the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

If when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants, and must say, "we have done but our duty," have we not all more need of monitors to humble us for doing so much less than our duty, than to be reprehended for being too diligent and exact?

I again protest, that it is not any works of supererogation, or human invention, superstition, or self-appointment, that I am defending, but only the accurate obeying of the laws of God, and the utmost diligence in such obedience, for the obtaining of everlasting life. Either God hath commanded these works of holiness, justice, and charity, or not. If he has not, then I have done, and yield the cause: it is only what he hath commanded that I plead for. O that before you either speak against any holy duty, or yourselves neglect it, you

would but come to us, and soberly join in searching the holy Scriptures, to see whether it be required there or not; and resolve but to obey it, if we prove it thence! And if it be but a matter of human imposition, we leave you to yourselves, and should desire that you may be much left to your liberty in such things; and that you place not too much of your religion therein. But if indeed it be commanded in the word of God, I beseech you, as you are Christians, and as you are men, remember that whenever you blame or scorn a holy duty, it is God himself that you blame or scorn. See whither you bring your opposition to a holy life. And dare you stand to this? Dare you as openly mock God for making strict and holy laws, as you do men for obeying them? None but a professed atheist dare.

Alas, sirs! it is nothing but intoxicating prosperity, and sensual delights, and worldly diversions, that turn your brains, and leave you not the sober use of reason, that make you think well of ungodly slothfulness, and make you think so contemptuously or senselessly of a heavenly life. I tell you, (and remember another day that you were told of it,) that there is not the boldest infidel in the world, nor the bitterest enemy to holiness in this assembly, but shortly would wish they had rather been saints in rags, with all the scorn and cruelty that malice can inflict on such, than to have braved it out in pride and gallantry, with the neglect of everlasting things. I tell you again, there is not an ungodly wretch that heareth me, but, ere long, would give a world if he were owner of a holy heart and life,

that he had spent his days in holy watchful preparations for his change, which he spent for that which will deceive him and forsake him.

Methinks I even see how you will passionately rage against yourselves, and tear your hearts with self-revenge, (if grace prevent it not by a safe repentance,) when you think too late how you lived on earth, and what golden times of grace you lost, and vilified all that would not lose them as foolishly as you. If repentance unto life made St. Paul call himself foolish, disobedient, deceived, and exceeding mad, (Tit. iii. 3. Acts xxvi. 11.) you may imagine how tormenting repentance will make you call yourselves too late.

O sirs! you cannot now conceive, while you sit here in health, and ease, and honour, what different thoughts will then possess you of a holy and unholy life. How mad you will think them that had but one life's time of preparation for eternal life, and desperately neglected it! And how sensible you will then be of the wisdom of believers, that knew their time, and used it while they had it! "Now wisdom is justified of all her children;" but then how sensibly will it be justified of all its enemies! O, with what remorse will undone souls look back on a life of mercy and opportunities, thus basely undervalued, and slept away in dreaming idleness, and fooled away for things of nought!

The language of that rich man, Luke xvi. may help you in your predictions. O how will you wonder at yourselves, that ever you could be so blind and senseless, as to be no more affected with the warnings of the Lord, and with the forethoughts of

everlasting joy and misery! To have but one small part of time to do all that ever must be done by you for eternity, and say all that ever you must say, for your own or others' souls, and that this was spent in worse than nothing! To have but one uncertain life, in which you must run the race that wins or loses heaven for ever; and that you should be tempted with a thing of nought, to lose that one irrecoverable opportunity, and to sit still or run another way, when you should have been making haste with all your might! O sirs, the thoughts of this will be other kind of thoughts another day than now you feel them; you cannot now think how the thoughts of this will then affect you! That you had a time in which you might have prayed, with promise of acceptance, and had no hearts to take that time! That Christ was offered to you as well as he was offered to them that entertained him; that you are called on, and warned as well as they, but obstinately despised and neglected all! That life and death were set before you, and the everlasting joys were offered to your choice, against the charms of sinful pleasures, and you might have freely had them if you would, and were told that holiness was the only way, and that it must be now or never, and yet that you chose your own destruction! These thoughts will be part of hell to the ungodly. They will wonder that reason could be so unreasonable; and that they, who had the common wit of man in other matters, should be so far beside themselves in that which is the only thing that is commendable to be wise for; that such sottish reasonings should prevail with them against the clearest light, and nothing should be preferred

before all things, and arguments fetched from chaff and filth, should conquer those that were fetched from heaven! O what heart-rending thoughts will these be, when eternity shall afford them leisure for an impartial review! Yea, that they should deceive others also with such a gross deceit, and scorn all that would not be as mad as they; that, being drunken with the world's delusion, they should abuse all that were truly sober; that the one thing needful should seem to them a needless thing! That their tongues should plead for these delusions of their wicked hearts, and they should be enemies to those that would not be enemies to God, and to themselves, and cast away their time and souls as they did! They will wonder with self-indignation, what could bewitch them into so great unreasonableness below a man, and against the light of nature, as well as of supernatural revelation.

Honourable and beloved hearers, I beseech you do not take it ill, that I speak so much of these matters that are so unpleasant and unwelcome to unbelieving, careless, carnal hearts. It is that I may prevent all this in time, by the awakenings of true repentance. And O that this might be the success! That I might hear by your penitent confessions, and see by your universal speedy reformation, that God hath so great mercy for you, and that these persuasions might be the means of so much happiness to you, and comfort unto me! However, this assembly shall be witnesses that you were warned; and conscience shall be witness, that if you waste the rest of your days in the pleasures and vanities of this deceitful world, it was not because you could have no

better, and were not called to higher things: that if you yet stand idle, it is not because you could not be hired. For, in the name of Christ, I have called you into his vineyard, and told you of your work and wages, and shamed your excuses and objections this day. Come away then speedily from the snares of sinners, and the company of deceived hardened men, and cast away the works of darkness. Heaven is before you! Death is at hand! The eternal God hath sent to call you! Mercy doth yet stretch forth its arms! You have stayed too long, and abused patience too much already: stay no longer! O now please God, and comfort us, and save yourselves, by resolving that "this shall be the day:" and faithfully performing this your resolution, "up and be doing:" believe, repent, desire, obey, and do all this with all your might; love him that you must love for ever, and love him with all your soul and might; seek that which is truly worth seeking, and will pay for all your cost and pains, and seek it first with all your might, remembering still it must be now or never.

Before I conclude, I have two messages yet to deliver. The one is of encouragement, the other of direction.

I know that many of you have a threefold trouble, which requireth a threefold comfort and encouragement.

One is, that you have done so little of your work, but lost so much of your time already; another is, that you are so opposed and hindered; and the greatest of all is, that you are yet so dull and slow. The cure of which must be the matter of my directions.

1. For the first: That you have lost your time, must be the matter of your humiliation: but that all is not lost before you see your sin and duty; but yet the patience and mercy of the Lord are attending you, and continuing your hope; this is the matter of your comfort and encouragement. Repent, therefore, that you came no sooner home, but rejoice that you are come home at last; and now be more diligent in redeeming your time, in remembrance of the time already lost. And though it must be your grief that your Master hath been deprived of so much of his service, and others of so much good which you should have done them, and that time is lost that cannot be recalled; yet it is your comfort, that your own reward may be equal with them that have borne the burden and heat of the day: "For many that are last (in the time of their coming in) shall be first" (in receiving the reward). This is the meaning of the parable in Matt. xx. which was spoken to encourage them that had stood out too long, and to rebuke the envy and high expectations of them that came in sooner; and it is no whit contradictory to those passages in Matt. xxv. which intimate a different degree of glory to be given to them that have different degrees of grace, upon their industrious improvement. The one parable, Matt. xx. shows, that men shall not be rewarded differently for their longer or shorter continuance in the work; but that those that came in late, and yet are found with equal holiness, shall be rewarded equally with the first, and more, if their holiness be more; which the second parable expresseth, declaring God's purpose to give them the greatest glory, that have improved

their holiness to the greatest measure. O, therefore, that the sense of your former unkindness may provoke you the more resolvedly to give up yourselves in fervent love, and full obedience! and then you will find that your time is redeemed, though it cannot be recalled, and that mercy hath secured your full reward.

2. And as for the opposition and hinderances in your way, they are no other than what your Lord foretold. He hath gone before you, and conquered. He hath bid you "be of good cheer," because he hath overcome the world. If you will not take up your cross and follow him, you cannot be his disciples. Would you be soldiers on condition you may not fight, or fight, and yet have no opposition? Follow the Captain of your salvation. If mocking, or buffetting, or spitting in his face, or hanging him upon a cross, or piercing his side, would have made him give up the work of your redemption, you had been left to utter desperation. The opposition that is conquerable, should serve but to excite your courage and resolution, in a case of such necessity, where you must prevail or perish. Have you God himself on your side, and Christ your captain, and the Spirit of Christ to give you courage, and the promise to invite you, and heaven before you, hell behind you, and the examples of such an army of conquering believers? and shall the scorns or threats of a crawling worm prevail against all these for your discouragement? You are not afraid lest any man should pull down the sun, or dry up the sea, or overturn the earth. And are you afraid that men should conquer God, or take you out of the

hands of Christ? "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Mark how they used David—"Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul." But did he therefore fear, or flee from God? No: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee; in God will I praise his word; in God have I put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." "Hearken to me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation." You deserve to be shut out of heaven, if you will not bear the breath of a fool's derision for it.

3. But, saith the self-accusing soul, I am convinced that I ought to be laborious for my salvation, and that all this is too little that I can do: but I am dull and cold, and negligent in all. I am far from doing it with my might; I hear, and read, and pray, as if I did not, and as if I were half asleep, or my heart were away upon somewhat else. I fear I am but a lazy hypocrite.

Answer. I shall first speak to thy doubt, and then direct thee against thy sin.

And first you must be resolved whether your sloth be such as is predominant or mortified; such that proveth that you are dead in sin, or only such as proveth you but diseased and infirm.

And to know this, you must distinguish, 1. Between the dulness and coldness of the affections, and the unresolvedness and disobedience of the soul. 2. Between a slothfulness that keepeth men from a godly life in a life of wickedness, and that which only keepeth them from some particular act of duty, or abateth the degree of their sincere affection and obedience. 3. Between that sloth that is the vicious habit of the will, and that which is the effect of age, or sickness, or melancholy, or any other distemper of the body.

And so the case lieth plain before you.

1. If it be not only your affections that are dull, but your will through sloth is unresolved; and this not only in a temptation to the abatement of some degrees, and the neglect of some particular duty, but against a holy life, and against the forsaking of your reigning sin; and this be not only through some bodily distemper, disabling your reason, but from the vicious habit of your wills—then is your sloth a mortal sign, and proves you in a graceless state. But if the sloth which you complain of, be only dulness of your affections, and the backwardness of your will to some high degrees, or particular duties, and the effect of some bodily distemper, or the weakness of your spiritual life, while your will is habitually resolved for God and a holy life, against a worldly fleshly life—this is your infirmity, and a sin to be lamented, but not a mark of death and gracelessness.

2. But yet though you have life, it is so grievous to be diseased, and languish under such an infirmity as sloth, that I advise you to stir up yourselves to the utmost, and give not way to a lazy temper; and that you may serve the Lord with all your might, I recommend these few directions to your observation :—

Direction 1. "When you would be quickened up to seriousness and diligence, have ready at hand such quickening considerations as are here before propounded to you; and set them before you, and labour to work them upon your hearts." Powerful truths will have some power upon your souls, if you but soberly apply your reason to them, and plead them with yourselves, as you would do with another in any of your reproofs or exhortations.

Direction 2. "Take heed lest any worldly design or interest, or any lusts or sensual delight, divert your minds from God and duty." For all the powers of your soul will languish, when you should set them on work on spiritual things, and your hearts will be abroad, when you should be wholly taken up with God, if once they be entangled with worldly things. Watch therefore over them in your callings, lest the creatures steal too deep into your affections: for if you be alive to the world, you will be in that measure dead to God.

Direction 3. "If it be possible, live under a lively ministry, that when your hearts go cold and dull to religious assemblies, they may come warm and quickened home." Life cherisheth life, as fire kindleth fire. The word and ordinances of God are quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged

sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit;" nay, the Word is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." And, therefore, it may do much to make you feel. Many a thousand hath it "pricked at the heart," and sent them home alive, that before were dead. Much more may you expect that it should excite the principle which you have already.

Direction 4. "If it may be, converse with lively, active, stirring Christians." But especially have one such for a bosom friend, that will warm you when you are cold, and help to awake you when you drop asleep, and will not comply with you in a declining, lazy, and unprofitable course. "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour: for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but wo to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one alone be warm? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

Direction 5. "Put not away from you the day of death. Look not for long life." It is the life to come that must be the life of all your duties here; distant things lose their force. Set death, and judgment, and eternal life, continually as near at hand: live in a watchful expectation of your change: do all as dying men, and as passing to receive the recompense of endless joy or wo, and this will quicken you. To this end, go often to the house of mourning, and be not unseasonably or immoderately in the house of mirth. When you observe what is the

end of all men, "the heart will be made better by it." But excess of carnal mirth doth infatuate men, and destroy their wisdom, seriousness, and sobriety. Keep always a sense of the brevity of life, and of the preciousness of time, and remember that it is posting on whether you work or play. Methinks, if you forget any of the rest, this one consideration that we have in hand, should make you bestir you with your might, that it must be now or never.

I shall only add two needful cautions, lest while we cure one disease, we cause another; as knowing that corrupted nature is used to run from extreme into extreme.

1. "Desire and labour more for a high estimation of things spiritual and eternal, and a fixed resolution, and an even and diligent endeavour, than for passionate feelings and affections." For these latter are more inconstant in the best, and depend much on the temper of the body, and are not of so great necessity as the former, though excellent in a just degree and season.

2. "Be suspicious when you have the warmest and liveliest affections, lest your judgment should be perverted by following when they should lead." It is very common for zeal and strong affections, even to that which is good, to occasion the mistakes of the understanding, and make men look all on one side, and think they can never go far enough from some particular sins, till ignorantly they are carried into some perhaps as great on the other hand. Be warned by the sad experience of these times, to suspect your judgments in the fervour of your affections.

And observing these cautions, let nothing abate your zeal and diligence; but whatever duty is set before you, do it with your might: for it must be now or never.

Though I know that the enmity to a holy, heavenly life, is so rooted in corrupt nature, that all I have said is necessary and too little; yet some I know will think it strange that I should intimate, that any that preach the Gospel are guilty of any measure of this sin, and will think that I intend by it to reflect upon some parties above the rest. But again I profess, that it is no party but the devil's party, and the ungodly party that I mean. And it is hard if you will not believe me concerning my own sense. Nor is it my desire that any of the odiousness of schism, sedition, rebellion, or disobedience to authority, should be so much as diminished by any man's profession of godliness. No, I beseech you, by how much the more godly you are, by so much the more detest all these: godliness tendeth to shame and condemn these odious sins, and not to be a cloak for them, or any extenuation. Nay, what can more aggravate them, than that they should be found in the professors of godliness? I again profess that I have no design but to plead for serious diligence in the religion which we are all agreed in, and to stop the mouth of those that wickedly speak against it.

But, alas, it is too evident that I have too many to speak to, that are not innocent. Why else doth Scripture tell us that such there will be still to the end of the world? and that there are some that preach Christ of strife and envy, to add affliction to

the bonds of the afflicted? And how came holy Mr. Bolton to find so much work for these rebukes so lately in his time, as in his books you find? And can we already forget what abundance of Antinomian teachers were among us, that turned out the very doctrine of practical diligence, and cried it down as a setting up of ourselves and our own works, and as injurious to free grace; and, under pretence of exalting Christ, did set up a heartless, lifeless doctrine, that tended to turn out the life of Christianity, and take men off their necessary diligence, as a legal, dangerous thing?

And what ordinance of God hath not been cast out by preachers themselves upon religious pretences, family duties, catechising, singing of psalms, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and what not? And if all these were down, wherein should the practice of religion consist? And what abundance of pamphlets had we, that laboured to make the orthodox faithful ministry a very scorn, and to deride them for their faithful service of God, and their faithfulness to their superiors in opposition to their unrighteous ways? I am loath to blot my papers, and trouble your ears with the names of the Martinmar-Priests, and a multitude of such others which I mean.

And let no papist, or any enemy of our Church, reproach us because such enemies to holiness are found among us. Can it be expected that our Church should be better than the family of Adam, that had a Cain? Or of Noah, that had a Ham? Or of Christ, that had a Judas? And are there not far more enemies to serious godliness among the papists themselves, than among us? There is no

place, no rank of men in the world, where some of the enemies of a holy life are not to be found, even among those that profess the same religion, in doctrine, with those whom they oppose. Christ and the devil have their several armies; and if once the devil disband his soldiers, and have none to oppose a holy life, then tell me that it is a needless thing to defend it, and to confute them. But I am listed under Christ, and will never give over pleading for him, till his adversaries give over pleading against him and his cause, as long as he continueth my liberty and duty. And blessed be the Lord, that if an hypocritical preacher be found among us, that secretly or openly disgraceth a diligent holy life, there are more able, holy, faithful ones to confute him both by doctrine and by their lives, than are to be found in any other kingdom in the world, proportionably, that ever I could hear of. And that the faithful disciples are so many, and the Judas's so few, how great a blessing is it to this land, and how great an honour to his Majesty's government, and to the Church, in his dominions! The Lord teach this sinful nation to be thankful, and pardon their ingratitude, and never deprive them of this forfeited mercy! The Lord teach them to hearken to the friends, and not to the enemies of holiness, and never to receive a wound at the heart of their religion, however they bear their smaller differences about things circumstantial!

And now I should conclude, I am loath to end, for fear lest I have not yet prevailed with you. What are you now resolved to do, from this day forward? It is work that we have been speaking of, and neces-

sary work of endless consequence, which must be done, and quickly done, and thoroughly done. Are you not convinced that it is so? that ploughing and sowing are not more necessary to your harvest, than the work of holiness in this day of grace is necessary to your salvation? You are blind, if you see not this: you are dead, if you feel it not: what then will you do? For God's sake, and for your own sake, stand not demurring till time be gone. It is all that the devil desireth, if he can but find you one thing or other to be thinking, and talking, and doing about, to keep you from this, till time be gone: and then he that kept you from seeing and feeling, will help you to see and feel to your calamity: then the devil will make you feel that which preachers could not make you feel: and he will make you think of that, and lay it close enough to your hearts, which we could not get you to lay to heart. Now we study and preach to you in hope; but then, (alas! it breaks our hearts to think of it,) we have done with you for ever, because all hope is gone. Then the devil may challenge a minister: 'Now do thy worst to bring this sinner to repentance: now call to him to consider, and believe, and come to Christ: now offer him mercy, and entreat him to accept it: now cry to him to take heed of sin and of temptations, that he come not to this place of torments: now tell him of the beauty or necessity of holiness, and call upon him to turn and live: now do thy worst to rescue him from my power, and save his soul.' Alas, poor sinners! will you stop your ears, and go on in sin, and damn yourselves, and break our hearts to foresee that day! Must we see

the devil go away with such a prey, and shall we not rescue your captivated souls, because you will not hear, you will not stir, you will not consent! O hear the God of heaven, if you will not hear us, who calleth to you, Return, and live! O hear him that shed his blood for souls, and tendereth you now salvation by his blood! O hear without any more delay, before all is gone, and you are gone, and he that now deceiveth you, torment you! Yet hold on a little longer in a carnal, earthly, unsanctified state, and it is too late to hope, or pray, or strive for your salvation. Yet a little longer, and mercy will have done with you for ever; and Christ will never invite you more, nor ever offer to cleanse you by his blood; nor sanctify you by his Spirit. Yet a little longer, and you shall never hear a sermon more, and never more be troubled with those preachers that were in good earnest with you, and longed once for your conversion and salvation. O sleepy, dead-hearted sinners, what should I do to show you how near you stand to eternity, and what is now doing in the world that you are going to, and how these things are thought on there! What should I do to make you know how time is valued, how sin and holiness are esteemed in the world where you must live for ever! What should I do to make you know those things to-day, which I will not thank you to know when you are gone hence! O that the Lord would open your eyes in time! O that I could but make you know these things as believers should know them! I say not as those that see them, nor yet as dreamers, that do not regard them, but as those that believe that they must shortly see them,

what a joyful hour's work should I esteem this! how happy would it be to you and me! If every word were accompanied with tears; if I followed you home, and begged your consideration on my bare knees, or as a beggar begs an alms at your doors; if this sermon cost me as many censures or slanders as ever sermon did, I should not think it too dear, if I could but help you to such a sight of the things we speak of, that you might truly understand them as they are: that you had but a true awakened apprehension of the shortness of your day, of the nearness of eternity, and of the endless consequence of your present work, and what holy labour and sinful loitering will be thought of in the world to come for ever. But when we see you sin, and trifle, and no more regard your endless life, and see also what haste your time is making, and yet cannot make you understand these things; when we know ourselves as sure as we speak to you, that you will shortly be astonished at the review of your present sloth and folly, and when we know that these matters are not thought of in another world, as they are among the sleepy or the bedlam sinners here, and yet know not how to make you know it, whom it doth so exceedingly much concern, this amazeth us, and almost breaks our hearts. Yea, when we tell you of things that are past doubt, and can be no further matter of controversy, than men have sold their understandings, and betrayed their reason to their sordid lusts, and yet we cannot get reasonable men to know that which they cannot choose but know, to know that seriously and practically which always hath a witness in their breasts, and which none but the profligate

dare deny; I tell you, sinners, this, even this, is worse than a prison to us. It is you that are our persecutors; it is you that are the daily sorrow of our hearts; it is you that disappoint us of our hopes, and make us lose so much of the labour of our lives. And if all others did as some do by us, alas! how sad an employment should we have, and how little would it trouble us to be silenced and laid aside! If we were sick of the ambitious or covetous thirst, we should then say that it is they that deny us wealth and honour, that disappoint us. But if we are Christians, this is not our case, but it is the thirst after your conversion and salvation which affecteth us: and, therefore, it is you, even you that linger in your sins, and delay repentance, and forget your home, and neglect your souls; it is you that disappoint us, and you that are our afflicters; and as much as you think you befriend us when you plead our cause against men of violence and rage, it is you that shall answer for the loss of our time, and labour, and hope, and for the grieving of your teachers' hearts.

Sinners, whatever the devil and raging passion may say against a holy life, God and your own consciences shall be our witnesses, that we desired nothing unreasonable, or unnecessary at your hands. I know it is the master-piece of the devil's craft, when he cannot keep all religion in contempt, to raise up a dust of controversy in the world about names, and forms, and circumstances in religion, that he may keep men busily striving about these, while religion itself is neglected or unknown; and that he may make men believe that they have some religion, because they are for one side or other in these con-

troversies: and especially that he may entice men to number the substantials of religion itself among these lesser doubtful points, and make sinners believe that it is but the precise opinion of one party that they reject, while they reject the serious practice of all true religion. And so the devil gets more by these petty quarrels and controversies, occasioned by contentious empty men, then he could have done by the open opposition of infidels, heathens, or the profane: so that neither I nor any man that opinionative men have a mind to quarrel with, can tell how to exhort you to the very practice of Christianity itself, but you are presently casting your thoughts upon some points wherein we are reported to differ from you, or remembering some clamours of malicious men, that prejudice against the person of the speaker, may keep your souls from profiting to salvation by the doctrine which even yourselves profess.

If this be the case of any one of you, I do not mean your consciences shall so escape the power or evidence of the truth. Dost thou talk of our differences about forms and ceremonies? Alas! man, what is that to the message which we come about to thee? what is that to the business that we are preaching of? The question that I am putting to you, is not whether you will be for this form of church-government, or for that, for a ceremony or against it; but it is, whether you will hearken in time to God and conscience, and be as busy to provide for heaven, as ever you have been to provide for earth? and whether you will set yourselves to do the work that you are created and redeemed for? This

is the business that I am sent to call you to; what say you? Will you do it, and do it seriously without delay? You shall not be able to say that I called you to a party, a faction, or some opinion of my own, or laid your salvation upon some doubtful controversy. No, sinner, thy conscience shall have no such shift for its deceit. It is godliness, serious and practical godliness, that thou art called to. It is nothing but what all Christians in the world, both Papists, and Greeks, and Protestants, and all the parties among those that are true Christians, are agreed in the profession of. That I may not leave thee in any darkness which I can deliver thee from, I will tell thee distinctly, though succinctly, what it is that thou art thus importuned to; and tell me, then, whether it be that which any Christian can make doubt of.

1. That which I entreat of thee, is but to live as one that verily believeth there is a God; and that this God is the Creator, the Lord and Ruler of the world: and that it is incomparably more our business to understand and obey his laws, and as faithful subjects to be conformed to them, than to observe or be conformed to the laws of man: and to live as men that do believe that this God is Almighty, and that the greatest of men are less than crawling worms to him; and that he is infinitely wise, and the wisdom of man is foolishness to him; and that he is infinitely good and amiable; that his love is the only felicity of man; and that none are happy but those that do enjoy it; and none that do enjoy it can be miserable; and that riches, and honour, and fleshly delights are brutish vanities in comparison of the

eternal love of God. Live but as men that heartily believe all this, and I have that I come for; and is any of this a matter of controversy or doubt? Not among Christians I am sure: not among wise men. It is no doubt to those in heaven, nor to those in hell, nor to those that have not lost their understandings upon earth. Live then according to these truths.

2. Live as men that verily believe that mankind is fallen into sin and misery; and that all men are corrupted, and under the condemnation of the law of God, till they are delivered, pardoned, reconciled to God, and made new creatures, by a renewing, restoring, sanctifying change. Live but as men that believe that this cure must be wrought, and this great restoring change must be made upon ourselves, if it be not done already. Live as men that have so great a work to look after; and is this a matter of any doubt or controversy? Sure it is not to a Christian: and methinks it should not be to any man else that knoweth himself, any more than to a man in a dropsy, whether he be diseased, when he feels the thirst and sees the swelling. Did you but know what cures and changes are necessarily to be made upon your diseased miserable souls, if you care what becomes of them, you would soon see cause to look about you.

3. Live but as men that verily believe that you are redeemed by the Son of God, who hath suffered for your sins, and brought you the tidings of pardon and salvation, which you may have, if you will give up yourselves to him who is the Physician of souls, to be healed by him. Live as men that believe that

the infinite love of God, revealed to lost mankind in the Redeemer, doth bind us to love him with all our hearts, and serve him with all our restored faculties, and to work as those that have the greatest thankfulness to show, as well as the greatest mercies to receive, and misery to escape : and as those that believe, that if sinners that, without Christ, had not hope, shall now love their sins and refuse to leave them, and to repent and be converted, and unthankfully reject the mercy of salvation so dearly bought, and freely offered them, their damnation will be doubled as their sin is doubled.

Live but as men that have such redemption to admire, such mercy to entertain, and such a salvation to attain, and that are sure they can never escape if they continue to "neglect so great salvation." And is there any controversy among Christians in any of this? There is not, certainly.

4. Live but as men that believe that the Holy Ghost is given by Jesus Christ to convert, to quicken, and to sanctify all that he will save; that "except you be born again of the Spirit, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his;" and that without this, no patching or mending of your lives, by any common principles, will serve the turn for your salvation, or make you acceptable to God. Live as men that believe that this Spirit is given by the hearing of the word of God, and must be prayed for, and obeyed, and not resisted, quenched, and grieved. And is there any controversy among Christians in any of this? Ask those that make a mock at holiness, sanctifica-

tion, and the Spirit, whether they be not baptized into the name of the Holy Ghost, and profess to believe in him as their Sanctifier, as well as in the Son, their Redeemer? And then ask them whether it be not a thing that should make even a devil to tremble, to come so near the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, as to mock at his office and sanctifying work, and at the "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;" and this after they are baptized and profess to believe in the Holy Ghost as their Sanctifier?

5. Live but as men that believe that sin is the greatest evil, the thing which the holy God abhorreth; and then you will never make a mock of it, as Solomon saith the foolish do; nor say, What harm is in it?

6. Live but as men that believe no sin is pardoned without repentance; and that repentance is the loathing and forsaking of sin: and that if it be true, it will not suffer you to live in any sin, nor to desire to keep the least infirmity, nor to be loath to know your unknown sins.

7. Live as those that believe that you are to be members of the Holy Catholic Church, and therein to hold the communion of saints. And then you will know that it is not as a member of any sect or party, but as a holy member of this holy church, that you must be saved: and that it is the name of a Christian, which is more honourable than the name of any division, or subdivision among Christians, whether Greek, or Papist, or Protestant, or Prelatist, or Presbyterian, or Independent, or Anabaptist. It is easy to be of any one of these parties; but to

be a Christian, which all pretend to, is not so easy. It is easy to have a burning zeal for any divided party or cause; but the zeal for the Christian religion is not so easy to be kindled or kept alive; but requireth as much diligence to maintain it, as dividing zeal requireth to quench it. It is easy to love a party as a party; but to keep up Catholic charity to all Christians, and to live in that holy love and converse which is requisite to a communion of saints, is not so easy. Satan and corrupted nature befriend the love and zeal of faction, which is confined to a party on a controverted cause; but they are enemies to the love of saints, and to the zeal for holiness, and to the Catholic charity which is from the Spirit of Christ. You see I call you not to division, not to side with sects; but to live as members of a holy Catholic Church, which consisteth of all that are holy in the world: and to live as those that believe the communion of saints.

8. Live as those that believe that there is a life everlasting, where the sanctified shall live in endless joy, and the unsanctified in endless punishment and wo: live but as men that verily believe a heaven and a hell, and a day of judgment, in which all the actions of this life must be revised, and all men judged to their endless state. Believe these things heartily, and then think a holy diligence needless if you can. Then be of the mind of the deriders and enemies of godliness if you can. If one sight of heaven or hell would serve without any more ado, instead of other arguments, to confute all the cavils of the distracted world, and to justify the most diligent saints in the judgment of those that now abhor

them, why should not a sound belief of the same thing in its measure do the same?

9. Live but as those that believe this life is given us as the only time to make preparation for eternal life: and that all that ever shall be done for your salvation, must be now, just now, before your time is ended: live as those that know, and need not faith to tell them, that this time is short, and almost at an end already, and stayeth for no man, but, as a post, doth haste away. It will not stay while you are taken up at stage plays, in compliments, in idle visits, or any impertinent, needless things: it will not tarry while you spend yet the other year, or month, or day, in your worldliness, or ambition, or in your lusts and sensual delights, and put off your repentance to another time. O sirs, for the Lord's sake, do but live as men that must shortly be buried in the grave, and their souls appear before the Lord, and as men that have but this little time to do all for their everlasting life, that ever must be done. O live as men that are sure to die, and are not sure to live till to-morrow: and let not the noise of pleasure or worldly business, or the chat or scorns of miserable fools, bear down your reason, and make you live as if you knew not what you know; or as if there was any doubt about these things. Who is the man and what is his name, that dares contradict them, and can make it good? O do not sin against your knowledge: do not stand still and see your glass running, and time making such haste, and yet make no more haste yourselves, than if you were not concerned in it: do not, O do not slumber, when time and judgment never slumber; nor

sit still when you have so much to do, and know all that is now left undone must be undone for ever! Alas, sirs, how many questions of exceeding weight have you yet to be resolved in! whether you are truly sanctified? whether your sins be pardoned? whether you shall be saved when you die? whether you are ready to leave this world and enter upon another? I tell you, the answering of these and many more such questions, is a matter of no small difficulty or concern. And all these must be done in this little and uncertain time. It must be now or never. Live but as men that believe and consider these certain unquestionable things.

10. Lastly, Will you but live as men that believe that the world and the flesh are the deadly enemies of your salvation? and that believe, that "if any man love the world, (so far) the love of the Father is not in him?" and as men that believe, that, "if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;" and that those who are in Christ Jesus, and are freed from condemnation, are such as "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit?" And that we must "make no provision for the flesh to satisfy the will or lusts thereof;" and must not "walk in gluttony and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, in strife and envying," but must "have our hearts where our treasure is," and our conversation in heaven; and being risen with Christ, must seek the things that are above, and set our affections on them, and not on the things that are on earth.

Sirs, will you say that any of this is our singular opinion, or matter of controversy and doubt? Are

not all Christians agreed in it? Do you not, your ownselves profess that you believe it? Live then but as those that do believe it, and condemn not yourselves in the things that you confess.

I tell thee, if now thou wilt refuse to live according to these common acknowledged truths, thou shalt never be able to say before the Lord, that men's controversies about a ceremony, or church-government, or the manner of worship, were the things that hindered thee. But all sorts and sects shall be witnesses against thee, and condemn thee; for they all agree in these things: even the bloodiest sect, that imprison, and torment, and kill others for their differences in smaller matters, are yet agreed with those that they persecute and murder, about these things. Papists are agreed in them, and Protestants are agreed in them. All the sects, that are now quarrelling among us, and in the world, are agreed in them, who are but meet for the name of Christians. All these will be ready to bear witness against the profane, the sensual, the slothful neglect of God and his salvation, and to say, We all confessed, notwithstanding our other differences, that all these things were certain truths, and that men's lives should be ordered according to these.

But if yet you pretend controversy to cover your malignity or ungodliness, I will go a little further, and tell you, that in the matter as well as in the principles, it is things that we are all agreed in which I call you to, and which the ungodly do refuse: I will briefly name them.

1. One part of your work which we urge you to do with all your might, is seriously and soberly to

consider often all these truths before-mentioned, which you say you do believe. And is it any controversy with reasonable men, whether they should use their reason? or with believers whether they should consider and lay to heart the weight and use of the things which they believe?

2. Another part of your work, is to love God with all your soul and might; and to make him your delight, and to seek first his kingdom, and the righteousness thereof: and to set your affections on the things above, and to live on earth as the heirs of heaven: and is there any controversy among Protestants, Papists, or any others, about this?

3. Another part of your work is, to see the honouring of God in the world, the promoting of his kingdom and government in yourselves and others, the doing his will, and obeying his laws: and is there any controversy in this?

4. Another part of your work is, to mortify the flesh, and reject its conceits, and desires, and lusts, which resist the aforesaid obedience to God; and to cast out the inordinate love and care of worldly things; to refuse the counsels, the commands, the will, the enticements and persuasions of men, which contradict the commands and will of God; to forsake all that you have in the world, rather than forsake your dear Redeemer, and hazard your salvation by any wilful sin; and to take up your cross and follow Christ through a life of suffering to glory. I know there is difficulty enough in all this, and that flesh will repine against it, and abhor it: but is there any controversy about it among any true believers? Is not all this the express command of God, and necessary to salvation?

5. Another part of your work is to avoid temptations, to flee from the occasions and appearances of evil, and not only to avoid that which is directly evil itself, but that also which would draw you into evil; to keep as far as may be from the brink of hell and danger, and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor be companions with them, but reprove them, and mourn for the unclean and wicked conversation of the world. This is it that we entreat of you; and is there any matter of controversy in all this?

6. Another part of the work which we call you to, is, to redeem this little time that is allotted you; to make the best of it, and improve it to the greatest furtherance of your salvation: to lose none of it upon unprofitable things; to spend it in those works which will comfort you most when time is gone. If it will be more comfortable to you in the day of judgment, that you have spent your time in plays, and sports, and idleness, and worldly cares, and pleasures, than in serving God, and preparing for another life, then hold on, and do so to the end: but if it will not, then do what you would hear of, seeing you must hear of it: spend none of your time in idleness and unfruitful things, till you have no better and more necessary things to spend it in, and till you have time to spare from more important work. This is our request to you, that you would not lose one hour of your precious time, but spend it as those that have lost too much, and have but a little more to spend in preparation for eternity. And is this any schismatical or factious motion? Is there any thing controvertible, or which any Christian can speak against, in any of this?

7. Another part of your work is, to "search the Scripture" as that which containeth directions for eternal life. To love the word of God more than "thousands of gold and silver," and prefer it before your necessary food; and to "meditate in it day and night," as that which is your pleasure and delight; and as that which "is able to make you wise unto salvation;" and "to build you up, and give you an inheritance among the sanctified." That you lay up the words of God in your hearts, and teach them diligently to your children, and talk of them "when you sit in your houses, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up," that "you and your households may serve the Lord." This is the work we call you to; and is there any thing that a Christian can make a controversy of in all this? Is there any thing that Protestants are not agreed in?

8. Another part of your work is, that you guard your tongues, and take not the name of God in vain, nor speak any reproaches or slanders against your brethren, and that "no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouths, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers;" and that "fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness be not once named among you, as becometh saints: neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which is not convenient, but rather giving of thanks." And is there any thing of doubt or controversy in this?

9. Another part of the work which we persuade you to, is to "pray continually," and "not wax faint;" to be fervent and importunate with God, as

those that know the greatness of their necessity. "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" That you pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; and "in every thing by prayer and supplication to make known your requests to God;" that you pray "for kings and all in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." And is there any thing in all this that any Christian can deny?

10. Lastly, the work we call you to, is, to love your neighbours as yourselves, and to do to others as you would have them do to you. To scorn, deride, molest, imprison, slander, or hurt no man, till you would be so used yourselves on the like occasion. To rejoice in other men's profit and reputation as your own. To envy none, to hate no man, to wrong none in their persons, estates or names; to preserve the chastity, honour, and estate of your neighbour as your own. To love your enemies, and forgive them that wrong you, and pray for them that hate, and hurt, and persecute you. This is your work: and is there any thing of faction, schism, or controversy in this? No, you shall shortly be convinced, that the differences and controversies of believers, and the many opinions about religion, were a wretched hypocritical pretence for your neglect and contempt of the substance of religion, about which there was no difference, but all parties were agreed in the confession of the truth, however hypocrites would not live according to their own professions.

But perhaps you will say, that there is such dif-

ference in the manner yet among them that agree in the principles and the matter, that you know not which way God is to be worshipped.

I answer, 1. Do you practise as aforesaid, according to the principles and matter agreed on, or not? If you do not, it is but gross hypocrisy to pretend disagreements in the manner, as an excuse for your contempt or omission of the matter, which all agree in. Forsooth your families shall be prayerless, and you will make a jest of serious prayer, because some pray by a book, and some without, and some that are wisest, think that either way is lawful. Will God be deceived by such silly reasonings as these?

2. But this shall not hide the nakedness of your impiety. Will you also, in the manner of your obedience, but go so far as all Christians are agreed in? I will briefly then give you some particular instances.

1. The work of God must be done with reverence, in his fear: not like the common works of men, with a common careless frame of mind: "God will be sanctified of all that draw near him." He will be served as God, and not as man: he will not be prayed to with a regardless mind, as those do that can divide their tongues from their hearts, and say over some customary words while they think of something else. It is a dreadful thing for dust to speak to God Almighty; and a dangerous thing to speak to him as slightly and regardlessly, as if we were talking to one of our companions. It beseemeth a believer to have more of the fear of God upon his heart, in his ordinary converse in the world, than hypocrites and formalists have in their most solemn

prayers. Knowest thou the difference between God and man? Put, then, such a difference between God and man in thy addresses, as his majesty requireth. And see also that thy family compose themselves to a reverent behaviour, when they join with thee in the worshipping of God. What have you to say now against this reverent manner of behaviour? Is there any thing controvertible in this?

2. It is also requisite that you be serious and sober in all the service you perform to God. Do it not ludicrously, and with half a heart. Be as much more fervent and serious in seeking God and your salvation, than you are in seeking worldly things, as God and your salvation are better than any thing in the world. Or, if that be beyond your reach, (though else there is reason for it,) at least, let the greatest things have the greatest power upon your hearts. You cannot pray more fervently for heaven, than heaven deserveth. O let but the excellency and greatness of your work appear in the serious manner of your performance! I hope you cannot say, that this is any point of controversy, unless it be a controversy whether a man should be a hypocrite, or be serious in the religion which he doth profess.

3. It is requisite that your service of God be performed understandingly. "For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding." "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." God delighteth not

in the blind devotion of men that know not what they do. Prayers not understood, are indeed no prayers; for no man's desire goeth further than his knowledge. And he expresseth not his desires, that knoweth not what he expresseth himself. Nor can he expect the concurrence of another man's desires, that speaketh what another understandeth not. The word that is not understood, cannot sink into the heart, and sanctify it; or, if it be not well and soundly understood, it is easily "stole away by the tempter." If understanding be necessary in our common conversations, much more in our holy addresses to the Almighty. "A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit;" but God hath "no pleasure in fools, or in their sacrifices;" nor is pleased with a parrot-like lip-service, which is not understood. He saith in detestation of the hypocrites, "This people draweth near unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." I hope, then, when we call you to serve God with judgment and with understanding, we call you to nothing that a Christian should make question of.

4. "God is a Spirit, and they that serve him must serve him in spirit and in truth." "The Father seeketh such to worship him." He calleth for the heart; he looketh for the inward desires of the soul; he converseth with minds that are abstracted from vanity, and are seriously taken up in attending him, and are intent upon the work they do. As he will be loved, so will he be served with all the heart, and soul, and might. And do we call

you then to any thing that is doubtful, when we call you to the spiritual worshipping of God?

5. Yet we maintain that the body hath its part in the service of God, as well as the soul; and the body must express the inward reverence and devotion of the soul, though not in a way of hypocritical ostentation, yet in a way of serious adoration. The bowing of the knee, the uncovering of the head, and reverent deportment, and whatsoever nature, or common use, or holy institution, hath made an expression of holy affections, and a decent and grave behaviour of ourselves, should be carefully observed in the presence of the Most High, and the holy things of God more reverently to be respected than the presence of any mortal man. And the rather, because that a grave, and reverent, and holy manner of deportment in God's worship, reflecteth upon the heart, and helpeth us in our inward and spiritual devotion; and it helps the beholders, and awakeneth them to reverent thoughts of God and holy things, which a regardless and common manner of deportment would extinguish. And it is no dishonour to reverent behaviour, that it is the use of hypocrites, but rather an honour to it; for it is something that is good that the hypocrite useth for the cloak of his secret emptiness or evil. If there were nothing good in reverent behaviour before God, it would not serve the hypocrite's turn: as it is a commendation to long prayer that the Pharisees made it their pretence for the devouring of widows' houses. And those that call them hypocrites that are much in holy exercises

and speeches, should consider, that if holy exercises and speeches were not good, they were not fit for the hypocrite's design: evil will not be a fit cloak for evil. That which the hypocrite thinks necessary to the covering of his sin, we must think more necessary to the cure of our sin, and the saving of our souls. The way to avoid hypocrisy, is not by running into impiety and profaneness: you must do more than the hypocrite, and not less, else he will rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you, if he would do more to seem good, than you would do to be good, and to please your Maker; if a Pharisee will pray longer to colour his oppression, than you will do to attain salvation. The mischief of hypocrisy is, that the soul of religion is wanting, while the body is present: and will you cast away both soul and body, both inside and outside, in opposition to hypocrisy? If others do seem to love God, when they do not, will you therefore not so much as seem to do it? So here about reverence in the service of God: the hypocrite should not exceed the sincere, in any thing that is truly good. This is the manner of God's service that we persuade you to, and to no other: and is there any thing of controversy in this? Prefer but the spiritual part, and know but what that meaneth, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," that so you may not condemn the innocent; and you shall never say, that we will be more backward than you to decency, and reverent behaviour in God's service.

6. God will be served in purity and holiness, with cleansed hearts and hands, and not with such as remain defiled with the guilt of any wilful sin.

He abhorreth the sacrifice of the wicked and disobedient. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, his prayers are abominable." "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight." "The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination; how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?" "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord," to oppressing wicked men. "When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting," &c. "And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord."

To play the glutton, or drunkard, or filthy fornicator in the day-time, and then to come to God at night, as if it were to make him amends by a hypocritical prayer; to blaspheme God's name, and oppose his rule, yea, oppose his kingdom and government in yourselves and others, and to do your own will, and hate and scorn them that do his will, and study his will that they may do it, and then to "pray that God's name may be hallowed, his king-

dom come, and his will be done," is abusing God, and not serving or pleasing him. Live according to your prayers, and let your lives show, as well as your words, what it is that you desire. This is the service of God that we call you to; and can you say, that there is any thing controvertible in all this? Are there any men, of any party among Christians, or sober infidels, that dare contradict it?

7. God will be served entirely and universally, in all his commands, and with all your faculties; in works of piety, justice, and charity, which must never be separated. You must not pretend your charity against duties of piety; for God is to be preferred in your estimation, love, and service; and all that is done for man, must be done for his sake. You must not set up duties of piety, against duties of justice, charity, and sobriety: it is not true piety that will not bring forth these. God must be loved above all; and our neighbour as ourselves; and these two sorts of love are inseparable. Do all the good you can to all while you have opportunity; "especially to them of the household of faith." What good you would hear of in the day of your accounts, that do now, speedily, diligently, and sincerely, according to your power. Say not, I may come to want myself; but "cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth;" nor whether all may not quickly be taken from thee: and then thou wilt wish thou hadst done good with it while thou hadst it, and lent it to the Lord, and trusted him with the remainder, who

entrusted thee with his blessings; and hadst made thee "friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when all fail, they might receive thee into the everlasting habitations." Drop not now and then a scant and grudging alms, as if thou wert a loser by it, and God must be beholden to thee; but believe that the greatest gain is to thyself, and look after such bargains, and do good as readily, and gladly, and liberally, as one that verily expecteth a full reward in heaven. This is part of the service of God that we exhort you to, even to visit, and relieve, and love Christ, in his members and brethren, (Matt. xxv.) and is there any thing of doubt or controversy in all this?

8. Moreover, God will be served with love, and willingness, and delight. It is the most gainful, honourable, blessed, and pleasant work in the world, which he hath appointed you, and not a toilsome task, or slavery. And, therefore, it is not a melancholy, pining, troublesome course of life that we persuade you to, under the name of godliness; but it is to rejoice in the Lord, and to live in the joyful expectations of eternal life, and in the sense and assurance of the love of God. If you could show us any probability of a more pleasant and joyful life on earth, than that which serious holiness doth afford, I should be glad with all my heart to hearken to you. I am ready to tell you what is the ground of our comforts, which faith revealeth. If you will come, and soberly debate the case, and show us the matter and ground of your comforts, which you have, or hope for, in any other way: if yours prove greater, and better, and surer than the joys of faith,

we will hearken to you, and be of your mind and side.

The matter of the joys of a believer is, that all his sins are pardoned; that God is reconciled to him in Christ; that he hath the promise of God, that all things, even the greatest sufferings, shall work together for his good; that he is always in the love, and care, and hands of God; that he hath leave to draw near to him by holy prayer, and open his heart to him in all his straits and wants; that he may solace himself in his praise and thanksgiving, and in other parts of holy worship; that he may read and hear his holy Word, the sure discovery of the will of God, and revelation of the things unseen, and the charter of his inheritance; that he may exercise his soul in the serious believing thoughts of the love of God revealed in the wonderful work of our Redeemer, and of the person, and office, and grace of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; and that he may love that God that hath so wonderfully loved him; that he hath the Spirit of God to quicken and actuate his soul, to supply his spiritual defects, and kill his sins, and help him to believe, to love, to rejoice, to pray: that this Spirit is God's seal upon him, and the earnest of everlasting life; that death shall not kill his hopes, nor end his happiness; but that his felicity and fullest joy begin, when all the comfort of worldlings hath an end, and their endless misery begins; that he is delivered from everlasting torment by the redemption of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit; that angels will attend his departing soul into the presence of his Father; that he shall be with his glorified Redeemer, and behold his glory; that

his body shall be raised to everlasting life: that he shall be justified by Christ from all the accusations of the devil, and all the slanders of the malicious world; that he shall live with God in endless glory, and see and enjoy the glory of his Creator, and shall never more be troubled with enemies, with sin or sorrow; but among his holy ones, shall perfectly and most joyfully love and praise the Lord for ever.

These are the matter of a believer's joy: these purchased by Christ, revealed in his word, sealed by his miracles, his blood, his sacraments, and his Spirit, are our comfort. This is the religion, the labour that we invite you to: it is not to despair, nor to some dry, unprofitable toil, nor to self-troubling, grieving, miserable, melancholy, costly sacrifices, or idle ceremonies, or irrational service, such as the heathens offered to their idols; it is not to cast away all cheerfulness and comfort, and to turn unsociable and morose, but it is to the greatest joys that the world alloweth, and nature is here capable of, and reason can discern and own. It is to begin a truly happy, sociable life. It is to flee from fear and sorrow, in fleeing from sin and hell, and from the consuming wrath of God; it is to the foretaste of everlasting joys, and to the beginnings of eternal life. This is the labour, the religion which we would have you follow with all your might.

If you have better things to seek, and follow, and find, let us see them, that we may be as wise as you. If you have not, for your soul's sake, make not choice of vanity, which will deceive you in the day of your necessity.

But you must not think to make us believe that

a great house, or a horse, or a feast, or a flatterer, or fine clothes, or any childish toys, or brutish filthiness, are more comfortable things than Christ, and everlasting life: or that it is sweeter and better to love lands or money, than to love God, and grace, and glory: nor that any thing that will go no further than the grave with you, is as good as that which will endure to eternity; nor that any pleasure which an animal hath, is equal to the delights of the angels of heaven: if you would have us of your mind, you must not be of this mind, nor persuade us to such horrible things as these. But we profess to you and all the world, that we are not so in love with sorrows, nor so fallen out with joy and pleasures, as to choose a life of miserable sadness, or refuse a life of true delight. If we could hear from any man, or find by the most diligent inquiry, that there is a more full, and sweet, and rational, and satisfactory, and durable delight to be had in any other way than that of serious faith and holiness, which Christ, in Scripture, hath revealed to us, we are like enough to hearken to it.

But can the distracted sensual world believe that it is sweeter and happier to ruffle it out in fleshly gallantry and sport, and to rage against the godly for a while, till the vengeance of God lay hold upon them, and give them their reward, than to live in the love of God, and wait in patience for the performance of God's promise of everlasting joy? O what a thing is fleshly passion, and raging sensuality, and blind unbelief! The Lord have mercy upon deluded sinners; the devil's business is to turn the world into a bedlam; and, alas, how strangely hath

he prevailed! That so many men can take their greatest misery for their happiness, and the only happiness for an intolerable life? Yea, and be so angry with all that are not of their mind, and will not set as much by filth and foolery, and as little by God and glory as they! Like the nobleman that was lunatic, or mad by fits, and whenever he was mad, he would swear all were mad that said not as he said, and would make all his servants be sent to bedlam that would not imitate him, and there they must lie as madmen till their lord was recovered from his madness. So are God's servants used and talked of in the world, as if they were beside themselves, as long as the world is uncured of its madness. As the man is, so is his judgment, and such is his relish, and desire, and delight. When I was a child, I had far more desire to fill my pin-box, than now I have to fill my purse, and accounted it a greater treasure, and had much more delight and contentment in it. And, alas, we may remember since we were strangers to the relish of heavenly things, that we found more pleasure in that of which we are now ashamed, than we did in the most high and excellent things. Let us, therefore, pity and pray for those that are distempered with the same disease.

I have been longer on this than I thought to have been, because men think that we call them from all joy, and pleasure, to a heavy, melancholy life, when we call them to serious diligence for their salvation. As if levity and folly were the only friends to pleasure; and it were only to be found in childish, worthless, transitory things. And as if the greatest

everlasting happiness were no matter of true delight, nor seriousness, or diligence, a friend to joy.

9. Moreover, as to the manner: God will be served with absolute self-resignation, without exceptions, limitations, or reserves; not with the leavings of the flesh, nor with a proviso that you may not suffer by your religion, or be poor, or despised, or abused, by the world. But with self-denial you must lay down all the interest of the flesh at his feet; and you must take up your cross, and follow a suffering Christ to glory. You must serve him as those that are wholly his, and not your own, and have nothing but what is his, and, therefore, nothing to be excepted, reserved, or saved from him; but must be content that you and all your interest be in his hands, and that you be saved by him. I know these terms seem hard to flesh and blood; but should heaven be the crown and reward to them that have undergone no trial for it? Here, however, is nothing but what is past all controversy.

10. Lastly, God will be served resolvedly and constantly. If you will reign, you must conquer and endure to the end. Opposition you must expect; and overcome, if you would not be overcome. It is not good beginnings that will serve your turn, unless you also persevere, and fight out the good fight of faith, and finish your course, and patiently wait to the last breath, for the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge will give the conquerors, when the unbelieving world shall say of their delight and hope, It is past and gone, we shall never see or taste it more, but must now taste of

that endless wrath of God which we were treasuring up, when we should have worked out our salvation.

Well, sirs, I have all this while been describing to you, both as to the principles, the matter, and the manner, what that religion and service of God is, in which you must labour with all your might: that you may see that it is no factious or private opinions or practices that we call you to do; and that your consciences may no longer be deluded with the pretences of men's different opinions in religion; and that the names of Prelate, Presbyterian, Puritan, Papist, nor any other sounding in your ears, may not so distract you, as to make you forget the name of Christian, which you have all undertaken,—nor what the Christian religion is. You see now that it is nothing, no not a syllable or tittle, which all sober Christians are not agreed in, that we persuade you to do, as the work of your religion. And, therefore, I tell you again here, before that God that shall be your Judge, and that conscience, that shall be as a thousand witnesses, that if you will go on in ungodly worldly lives, and refuse the serious diligence of Christians in this religion which yourselves profess, it shall be so far from being any excuse to you, that there were hypocrites, or heretics, or schismatics, or different opinions in religion in the world, that this very thing shall aggravate your sin and condemnation, that all these hypocrites, schismatics, or differing parties in the church, did agree in confession of all these things, and yet for all that you would not practise them: no, nor practise what yourselves confessed. All these parties, or sects, shall rise up

against the sensual and profane ungodly sinner, and say: 'Though we were ignorant or doubtful of many other things, yet we are all agreed in these: we gave our concurrent testimony to them: we tempted no man to doubt of these, or to deny them.' If you will err more than a hypocrite, or a schismatic, and be far worse than those that are such, or as you count such, and think to excuse it, because they erred in lesser things, it is as if the devil should excuse his sin by saying, 'Lord, thy saints did none of them love thee as they should, and hypocrites did but seem to love thee, and, therefore, I thought I might hate thee, and set myself against thy ways.'

'But,' saith the ungodly sensualist, 'I will never believe that God delighted in long and earnest prayers: or that he is moved by the passions or the words of men; and, therefore, I take this but for babbling, which you call the serious diligence of believers, in their serving God.'

To this impious objection, I return these several answers:—

1. Suppose this were true, as you imagine, what is this to you that serve God no way at all, with any serious diligence? that live in sensuality, and wilful disobedience to his laws, and do more for your bodies than for your souls, and for temporal things than for eternal?

2. Who do you think is likeliest to understand God's mind, and what is pleasing to him? Himself or you? Is any thing more plainly commanded in God's word, than praying with frequency, fervency, and importunity, Luke xviii. 1—7. 1 Thes. v. 17. James v. 16. And will you tell God that he

hath but dissembled with you, and told you that he is pleased with that which is not pleasing to him?

3. And what is the reason of your unbelief? forsooth, because God is not moved with human words or passions! I grant he is not. But what of that? Hath prayer no other use but to move God? It is enough, 1st, That it moveth us, and fitteth us to receive his mercies. 2d, And that God hath made it necessary to the effect, and a means or condition without which he will not give the blessing. Do you think (if you judge but by natural reason) that a person is as fit for a mercy that knoweth not the want or worth of it, and would not be thankful for it if he had it, as one that valueth it, and is disposed to thankfulness and improvement? And do not you know that holy prayer is nothing but the actuating of holy desires, and the exercise of all those graces which are suited to the due estimation and improvement of the mercy? And is it not the way when we would draw the boat to the bank, to lay hold of the bank, and pull, as if we would draw it to the boat? If God be not moved and drawn to us, it is enough that we are moved and drawn to God. And withal that God may give us his own blessings, upon what terms he please, and that he hath assured us he will give them but to those that value, desire, and seek them, and that with faith and fervency, and importunity.

And yet I may add, that God is so far above us, as that his incomprehensible essence, and blessed nature are very little known to us; and, therefore, though we know and confess that he hath no human passions nor imperfections, yet if he assume

to himself the title of such a thing as love, desire, joy, or wrath, we must in reason believe, that though these are not in God as they are in man with any imperfection; yet there is something in God that cannot more fitly be represented to man, nor be understood by man, than by the images of such expressions as God himself is pleased to use.

4. I beseech you, hearken to nature itself. Doth it not teach all rational creatures in necessity to pray to God? A storm will teach the profanest seaman to pray, and that with continuance and fervency. The mariners could say to Jonah in their danger, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God; if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. And they themselves cried every man unto his god." When thou comest to die, and seest there is no more delay, nor any more hope from the pleasures of sin, or from any of thy old companions or old deceits, then tell me whether nature teach thee not to cry, and cry mightily for pardon, and mercy, and help to God? Then we shall hear thee crying, 'O mercy, mercy, Lord, upon a miserable sinner!' though now thou wilt not believe that prayer doth any good.

I will say no more to thee of this: if nature be not conquered, and grace hath not forsaken thee, thou wilt be taught at home to answer this objection. Sure thou canst not easily so far conquer reason, as to believe that there is no God. And if thou believest that there is a God, thou canst not believe that he is not to be worshipped, and that with the greatest seriousness and diligence. Nor that he is not the Giver of all that thou dost want.

Or that the Governor of the world regardeth not the dispositions and actions of his subjects, but will equally reward the good and bad, and give to all alike, and have no respect to men's preparations for his reward. What heathen that believeth that there is a God, doth not believe that prayer to him is a necessary part of his worship?

Objection. "But is not your strict observation of the Lord's day, a controverted thing?"

Answer. In this also I will strip thee of this excuse.

1. Spend the Lord's day but according to the common principles of Christianity and reason, and it shall suffice. Spend it but as one that loveth God better than any thing in the world, and that taketh more pleasure in his service than in sin and vanity. Spend it but as the necessities of thy own soul, and thy families require: as one that is glad of so honourable, gainful, and delightful an employployment, as the public and private worshipping of God, and the serious contemplation of the life to come; as one that knoweth the need and benefit of having stated times for the service of God:—and what would come of all religion, if the time were left to each one's will? Spend it as men that put a just difference between the common business of this world and the things that concern your endless state; and that have considered the proportion of one day in seven, in reference to this different consequence of the work. Spend it as men that have lost as much time as you have done, and have need to make the best of the little that is left; and that are so far behind hand in the matters of your salvation, and have need to work with all your might,

and should be gladder of the helps of such a day, than of thousands of gold and silver. Spend it as those that believe that we owe God as much service as the Jews did. Spend it as the ancient Christians spent it, that were wont to stay together almost from morning till night in public worship and communion. Spend it as the king's declaration requireth, which saith, 'Our purpose and resolution are, and shall be, to take care that the Lord's day be applied to holy exercises, without unnecessary divertisement.'

2. And if yet there be any doubt in this, I refer you to the judgment of the Church of England, expressed in the homily of the time and place of prayer. And for the time, the name, the antiquity, and authority, and the work itself, I desire you but to receive what is there delivered, not by any factitious persons, but by the church. Do this, and we are agreed and satisfied. And I make it my request to the reader, to peruse both parts of that homily, that he may know how far the Church of England is from the loose conceits of the enemies of godliness. And if also you will read over the homilies against the peril of idolatry, you will the more fully know the judgment of the church about the manner of God's worship. Indeed the whole book is such as the people should be acquainted with.

I have done my part to open to you the necessity of *serious diligence*, and to call up the sluggish souls of sinners to mind the work of their salvation, and to do it *speedily*, and with all their *might*. I must now leave the success to God and you. What use you will make of it, and what you will be and do

for the time to come, is a matter that more concerneth yourselves than me. If long speaking, or multitude of words, were the way to prevail with you, I should willingly speak here while my strength would endure, and lengthen out my exhortations yet seven fold. But that is not the way: a little wearieth you: you love long feasts, and long visits, and plays, and sports, much better than long sermons, or books, or prayers. But it is no small grief to us, to leave you in a cause of such importance, without some considerable hopes of your deliverance.

Sirs, the matter is now laid before you, and much in your own hands; it will not be so long. What will you now do? Have I convinced you now, that God and your salvation are to be sought with all your might? If I have not, it is not for want of evidence in what is said, but for want of willingness in yourselves to know the truth. I have proved to you, that it is a matter out of controversy, unless your lusts, and passions, and carnal interest will make a controvery of it. I beseech you tell me, if you be of any religion at all, why are you not strict, and serious, and diligent, and mortified, and heavenly in that religion which you are of? Sure you will not so far shame your own religion, whatever it be, as to say that your religion is not for mortification, holiness, heavenliness, self-denial, or that your religion alloweth you to be ambitious, covetous, gluttonous, drunken,—to curse, and swear, and rail, and oppress the innocent. It is not religion, but diabolical serpentine malignity, that is for any of this.

It is wonderful, to think that learned men, and gentlemen, and men, that pretend to reason and in-

genuity, can quietly betray their souls to the devil upon such silly grounds, and do the evil that they have no more to say for, and neglect that duty that they have no more to say against, when they know they must do it now or never. That while they confess that there is a God, and a life to come, a heaven and a hell, and that this life is purposely given us for preparation for eternity, while they confess that God is most wise, and holy, and good, and just, and that sin is the greatest evil, and that the word of God is true, they can yet make shift to quiet themselves in an unholy, sensual, careless life; and that while they honour the apostles and martyrs, and saints that are dead and gone, they hate their successors and imitators, and the lives that they lived, and are inclined to make more martyrs by their malicious cruelty.

Alas! all this comes from the want of a sound belief of the things which they never saw; and the distance of those things, and the power of passion, and sensual objects and inclinations, that hurry them away after present vanities, and conquer reason, and rob them of their humanity; and from the noise of the company of sensual sinners, that harden and deafen one another, and by the just judgment of God forsaking those that would not know him, and leaving them to the blindness and hardness of their hearts. But is there no remedy? O Thou, the Fountain of mercy and relief, vouchsafe these miserable sinners a remedy! O Thou, the Saviour of lost mankind, have mercy upon these sinners in the depth of their security, presumption, and misery! O Thou, the Illuminator and Sanctifier of souls, apply the remedy so dearly purchased!

Poor sleepy sinners, hear us! Though we speak not to you as men would do that had seen heaven and hell; and were themselves in a perfectly awakened frame, yet hear us while we speak to you the words of truth, with some seriousness and compassionate desire for your salvation. O look up to your God! Look out unto eternity: Look inwardly upon your souls: Look wisely upon your short and hasty time: and then bethink you how the little remnant of your time should be employed; and what it is that most concerneth you to despatch and secure before you die. Now you have sermons, and books, and warnings: it will not be so long. Preachers must have done: God threateneth them, and death threateneth them, and men threaten them, and it is you, it is you that are most severely threatened, and that are called on by God's warnings. "If any man have an ear to hear, let him hear." Now you have abundance of private helps, you have abundance of understanding gracious companions; you have the Lord's day to spend in holy exercises, for the edification and solace of your souls; you have choice of sound and serious books: and blessed be God, you have the protection of a Christian and a Protestant king and magistracy: O what invaluable mercies are all these! O know your time, and use these with industry, and improve this harvest for your souls! For it will not be thus always: it must be now or never. You have yet time and leave to pray and cry to God in hope: yet if you have hearts and tongues, he hath a hearing ear; the Spirit of grace is ready to assist you. It will not be thus always: the time is coming when the loudest cries will do no good.

O pray, pray, pray, poor needy miserable sinners; for it must be now or never.

You have yet health and strength, and bodies fit to serve your souls: it will not be so always: languishing, and pains, and death are coming. O use your health and strength for God; for it must be now or never.

Yet there are some stirrings of conviction in your consciences: you find that all is not well with you; and you have some thoughts or purposes to repent and be new creatures. There is some hope in this, that yet God hath not quite forsaken you. O trifle not, and stifle not the convictions of your consciences, but hearken to the witness of God within you. It must be now or never.

Would you not be loath to be left to the despairing case of many poor distressed souls, that cry out, 'O it is now too late! I fear my day of grace is past; God will not hear me now if I should call upon him: he hath forsaken me, and given me over to myself. It is too late to repent, too late to pray, too late to think of a new life; all is too late.' This case is sad; but yet many of these are in a safer and better case than they imagine, and are but frightened by the Tempter: and it is not too late, while they cry out, 'It is too late;' but if you are left to cry in hell, 'It is too late;' alas, how long and how doleful a cry and lamentation will it be!

O consider, poor sinner, that God knoweth the time and season of thy mercies. He giveth the spring and harvest in their season; and all his mercies in their season, and wilt thou not know thy time and season, for love, and duty, and thanks to him?

Consider that God, who hath commanded thee thy work, hath also appointed thee thy time. And this is his appointed time. To-day, therefore, hearken to his voice, and see that thou harden not thy heart. He that bids thee "repent and work out thy salvation with fear and trembling," doth also bid thee do it now. Obey him in the time, if thou wilt be indeed obedient; he best understandeth the fittest time. One would think to men that have lost so much already, and loitered so long, and are so lamentably behind hand, and stand so near the bar of God, and their everlasting state, there should be no need to say any more, to persuade them to be up and doing. I shall add but this: 'You are never like to have a better time.' Take this, or the work will grow more difficult, more doubtful, if through the just judgment of God, it become not desperate. If all this will not serve, but still you will loiter till time be gone, what can your poor friends do but lament your misery! The Lord knows, if we knew what words, what pains, what cost would tend to your awakening, and conversion, and salvation, we should be glad to submit to it: and we hope we should not think our labours, or liberties, or our lives too dear to promote so blessed and so necessary a work. But if when all this is done that we can do, you will leave us nothing but our tears and moans for self-destroyers, the sin is yours, and the suffering shall be yours. If I can do no more, I shall leave this upon record, that we took our time to tell you, that *serious diligence* is necessary to your salvation; and that God is the "Rewarder of them that diligently seek him," and that this was your day, your only day. It must be *now or never.*

FIFTY REASONS

WHY

A SINNER

OUGHT TO

TURN TO GOD THIS DAY,

WITHOUT DELAY.

FIFTY REASONS.

HEB. III. 7, 8.

To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

1. CONSIDER to whom it is that you are commanded to turn; and then tell me whether there can be any reason for delay. It is not to an empty deceitful creature, but to the faithful all-sufficient God; to Him that is the cause of all things; the strength of the creation; the joy of angels; the felicity of the saints; the sun and shield of all the righteous; the refuge of the distressed; and the glory of the whole world. Of such power, that his word can take down the sun from the firmament, and turn the earth and all things into nothing; for he doth more in giving them their being and continuance: of such wisdom, that he was never guilty of mistake; and therefore will not mislead you, nor draw you to any thing that is not for the best: of such goodness, as that evil cannot stand in his sight, and nothing but your evil could make him displeased with you; and it is from nothing but evil, that he calleth you to turn. It is not to a malicious enemy, that would do you mischief, but to a gracious God, that is love itself; not to an implacable jus-

tice, but to a reconciled Father; not to revenging indignation, but to the embrace of those arms, and the mercy of that compassionate Lord, that is enough to melt the hardest heart, when you find yourself, as the poor returning prodigal, in his bosom, when you deserved to have been under his feet. And will the great and blessed God invite thee to his favour, and wilt thou delay and demur upon the return? The greatest of the angels of heaven are glad of his favour, and value no happiness but the light of his countenance. Heaven and earth are supported by him, and nothing can stand without him. How glad would those very devils be of his favour, that tempt thee to neglect his favour! And wilt thou delay to turn to such a God? Why, man, thou art every minute at his mercy: if thou turn not, he can throw thee into hell when he will, more easily than I can throw this book to the ground. And yet dost thou delay? There are all things imaginable in him to draw thee. There is nothing that is good for thee, but it is perfectly in him, where thou mayest have it certain and perpetual. There is nothing in him to give the least discouragement: let all the devils in hell, and all the enemies of God on earth, say the worst they can against his majesty, and they are not able to find the smallest blemish in his absolute holiness, and wisdom, and goodness. And yet wilt thou delay to return?

2. Consider also, to what it is that thou must turn. Not to uncleanness, but to holiness; not to the sensual life of a beast, but to the noble rational life of a man, and the more noble heavenly life of

a Christian; not to an unprofitable worldly toil, but to the most gainful employment that ever the sons of men were acquainted with; not to the deceitful drudgery of sin, but to that godliness which is profitable to all things, "having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Sirs, do you know what a life of holiness is? You do not know it, if you turn away from it. I am sure, if you knew it, you would never fly from it. No, nor endure to live without it. Why, a life of holiness is nothing but living unto God; to be conversant with him, as the wicked are with the world; and to be devoted to his service, as sensualists are to the flesh. It is to live in the love of God, and of our Redeemer; and in the foretastes of his everlasting glory, and of his love; and in the sweet forethoughts of that blessed life that shall never end; and in the honest self-denying course that leadeth to that blessedness. A godly life is nothing else but a sowing the seed of heaven on earth; and a learning, in the school of Christ, the songs of praise which we must use before the throne of God; and by suffering,—a learning how to triumph and reign with Christ.

Can you delay to come into your Father's family; into the vineyard of the Lord; into the kingdom of God on earth; to be "fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God;" to have the pardon of all your sins, and the sealed promise of everlasting glory? Why, sirs, when you are called on to turn, you are called to the porch of heaven, into the beginning of salvation; and will you delay to accept everlasting life?

3. Consider also, From what you are called to turn; and then judge whether there be any reason of delay. It is from the devil, your enemy; from the love of a deceitful world; from the seductions of corrupted brutish flesh; it is from sin the greatest evil. What is there in sin that you should delay to part with it? Is there any good in it? Or what hath it ever done for you that you should love it? Did it ever do you good? Or did it ever do any man good? It is the deadly enemy of Christ and you, that caused his death, and will cause yours, and is working for your damnation, if converting and pardoning grace prevent it not. And are you loath to leave it? It is the cause of all the miseries of the world, of all the sorrows that ever did befal you, and the cause of the damnation of them that perish; and do you delay to part with it?

4. Your delaying shows that you love not God, and that you prefer your sin before him, and that you would never part with it if you could have your will. For if you loved God, you would long to be restored to his favour, and to be near him, and employed in his service and his family. Love is quick and diligent, and will not draw back. And it is a sign also that you are in love with sin: for else, why should you be so loath to leave it? He that would not leave his sin and turn to God, till the next week, or the next month, or year, would never turn if he might have his desire. For that which makes you desirous to stay a day or a week longer, doth indeed make you loath to turn at all. And therefore it is but hypocrisy to say, that you are willing to turn hereafter, if you are not willing to do it now without delay.

5. Consider, what a case you are in, while you thus delay! Do you think you stand on dry ground, or in a safe condition? If you knew where you are, you would sit as upon thorns as long as you are unconverted; you would be as a man that stood up to the knees in the sea, and saw the tide coming towards him, who certainly would think that there is no standing still in such a place. In a word, you are the drudges of sin, the slaves of the devil, the enemies of God, the abusers of his grace and Spirit, the despisers of Christ, the heirs of hell. And is this a state to stay in an hour? You have all your sin unpardoned; you are under the curse of the law; the wrath of God is upon you, and the fulness of it hangs over your heads; judgment is coming to pass upon you the dreadful doom; the Lord is at hand; death is at the door, and waits but for the word from the mouth of God, that it may arrest you, and bring you to everlasting misery: and is this a state for a man to continue in?

6. Moreover, Your delaying giveth great advantage to the Tempter. If you would presently turn and forsake your sins, and enter into a faithful covenant with God, the devil would be almost out of hope, and the very heart of his temptations would be broken. He would see that now it is too late; there is no getting you out of the arms of Christ. But as long as you delay, you keep him in heart and hope; he hath time to strengthen his prison and fetters, and to renew his snares; and if one temptation serve not, he hath time to try another and another; as if you would stand as a mark for Satan to shoot at, as long as he pleases. What likelihood

is there that ever so foolish a sinner should be recovered and saved from his sin?

7. Moreover, Your delaying is a vile abuse of Christ and the Holy Ghost, and may so far provoke him, as to leave you to yourself, and then you are past help. If you delight so to trample on your crucified Lord, and will so long put him to it by refusing his grace and grieving his Spirit, what can you expect but that he should turn away in wrath, and utterly forsake you, and say—'Let him keep his sin, seeing he had rather have it than my grace; let him continue ungodly, seeing he is so loath to be sanctified: let him take his own course, and die in his sin, and repent in hell, seeing he would not repent on earth.' You provoke Christ thus to give you up.

8. Consider also, I beseech you, If you ever mean to turn, what it is that you stay for. Do you think to bring down Christ and heaven to your own terms, and to be saved hereafter with less ado? Sure, you cannot be so foolish: for God will be still the same; and Christ the same; and his promise hath still the same condition, which he will never change; and godliness will be the same, and as much against your carnal interest hereafter as it is now. When you have looked about you ever so long, you will never find a fairer or nearer way; but this same way you must go or perish. If you cannot leave sin now, how shall you leave it then? It will still be as sweet to your flesh as now: or if one grow stale by the decay of nature, another that is worse will spring up in its stead, and though the acts abate, they will all live still at the root; for sin was

never mortified by age. So that if ever you will turn, you may best turn now.

9. Yea, more than that, the longer you stay, the harder it will be. If it be hard to-day, it is like to be harder to-morrow. For as the Spirit of Christ is like to forsake you for your wilful delays, so custom will strengthen sin: and custom in sinning will harden your hearts, and make you "past feeling, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Cannot you crush this serpent when it is but weak; and can you encounter it in its serpentine strength? Cannot you pluck up a tender plant; and can you pluck up an oak or cedar? O sinners! what do you mean, to make your recovery so difficult by delay? You are never like to be fairer for heaven, and to find conversion an easier work, than now you may do. Will you stay till the work be ten times harder, and yet do you think it so hard already?

10. Consider also, that sin gets daily victories by your delay. We lay our batteries against it, and preach, and exhort, and pray against it, and it gets a kind of victory over all, as long as we prevail not with you to turn. It conquereth our persuasions and advice; it conquereth all the stirrings of your consciences; it conquereth all your heartless purposes and deceitful promises. And these frequent conquests strengthen your sin, and weaken your resistance, and leave the matter almost hopeless. Before a physician hath used remedies, he hath more hope of a cure, than when he hath tried all means, and finds that the best medicines do no good, but the man is still as bad or worse. So when all means have been tried with you, and yet you are uncon-

verted, the case draws towards desperation itself: the very means are disabled more than before; that is, your hearts are harder to be wrought upon by them. When you have long been under sermons and reading, and among good examples, and yet you are unconverted; these ordinances lose much of their force with you. Custom will make you slight them, and be dead-hearted under them. And it is these very same means and truths, that you have frustrated, that must do the work, or it will never be done.

11. Moreover, age itself hath many inconveniences, and youth hath many great advantages: and therefore it is folly to delay. In age the understanding and memory grow dull, and people grow incapable, and almost unchangeable. We see, by our every day's experience, that men think they should not change when they are old; that opinion or practice, in which they have been brought up, they think that they should not then forsake. To learn when they are old, and to turn when they are old—you see how much they are against it. Besides, how unfit is age to be at that pains that youth can undergo? How unfit to begin the holy warfare against the flesh, the world, and the devil? God's way is to list his soldiers as soon as may be, when in youth; but the devil will persuade them that it is yet too soon; and when he can no longer persuade them that it is yet too soon, he will then persuade that it is too late. O what a happy thing it is to come to God betimes, and with the first! What advantage hath youth! They have the vigour of wit and of body; they are not rooted and

hardened in sin, nor filled with prejudice and obstinacy against godliness, as others are.

12. You have such times of advantage and encouragement as few ages of the world have ever seen, and few nations on earth enjoy at this day. What plain and plentiful teaching have you! What abundance of good examples, and the society of the godly! Private and public helps are common. Seldom has the church seen such days on earth. And yet is not the way to heaven fair enough for you? Yet are you not ready to turn to God? When should men make hay, but when the sun shines? Will you delay till this harvest time be over, and the winter of persecution come again? Have you sun, and wind, and tide, to serve you, and will you stay to set out in storms and darkness?

13. Moreover, Your delay doth cast your conversion and salvation into hazard, yea, into many and grievous hazards. And is your everlasting happiness a matter to be wilfully hazarded, by causeless and unreasonable delays? 1. If you delay today, you are utterly uncertain of living till to-morrow. If you put by this one motion, you know not whether ever you may have another. Alas! that ever the heart of man should be so senseless as to delay, when they know not but it may prove their damnation! And when heaven or hell must certainly follow, that they dare put off a day or an hour, when they know not whether ever they shall see another! 2. And as your life is uncertain, so are the means uncertain by which God useth to do the work. He may remove your teachers and other helps; and then you will be further off than before. 3. And if

both should continue, yet grace itself is uncertain. You know not whether ever the Spirit of God will put another thought of turning into your hearts; or at least, whether he will incline your hearts to turn.

14. Moreover, The delay of conversion continueth your sin, and so you will daily increase their number, and increase your guilt, and make your souls abundantly miserable. Are you not deep enough in debt to God already, and have you not sins enough to answer for upon your souls? Would you fain have one year's sins more, or one day's sins more, to be charged upon you? O, if you did but know what sin is, it would amaze you to think what a mountain lieth already upon your consciences! One sin unpardoned will sink the stoutest sinner into hell; and you have many a thousand upon your souls already, and would you yet have more? Methinks you should rather look about you, and bethink you how you may get a pardon for all that is past.

15. And as sin increaseth daily by delay, so consequently the wrath of God increaseth, and you will run further into his displeasure, and possibly you may cut down the bough that you stand upon, and hasten even bodily destruction to yourselves. When you live daily upon God, and are kept out of hell, by a miracle of his mercy, methinks you should not desire yet longer to provoke him, lest he withdraw his mercy, and let you fall into misery.

16. And do but consider, What will become of you if ye be found in these delays? You are then lost, body and soul, for ever. Now if you had but hearts to know what is good for you, the worst of

you might be converted and saved; for God doth freely offer you his grace. But if you die in your delays, in the twinkling of an eye you will find yourselves utterly undone for ever. Now there is a hope of a change, but when delays have brought you to hell, there is no more change, and no more hope.

17. Consider, That your very time, which you lose by these delays, is an inconceivable loss. When time is gone, what would you then give for one of those years, or days, or hours, which you now foolishly trifle away? O wretched sinners, are there so many thousand souls in hell that would give a world, if they had it, for one of your days; and yet can you afford to throw them away in worldliness, and sensuality, and loitering delays? I tell you, time is better worth than all the wealth and honours of the world. The day is coming when you will value time: when it is gone you will know what a blessing you made light of. But then all the world cannot call back one day or hour of this precious time, which you can sacrifice now to the service of your flesh, and cast away on unprofitable sinning.

18. Consider also, that God hath given you no time to spare. He hath not lent you one day or hour, more than is needful for the work that you have to do; therefore you have no reason to lose any by your delays. Do you imagine that God would give a man an hour's time for nothing? much less for to abuse him and serve his enemy. No, let me tell you, that if you make your best of every hour, if you should never lose a moment of your lives, you would find all little enough for the work

you have to do. I know not how others think of time, but for my part I am forced daily to say, How swift, how short is time! And how great is our work! And when we have done our best, how slowly it goeth on! O precious time! What hearts have they, what lives do those men lead, that think time long! That have time to spare, and to pass in idleness!

19. To convince you more, Consider, I beseech you, the exceeding greatness of the work you have to do; and tell me then, whether it be time for you to delay. Especially you, that are yet unconverted, and strangers to the heavenly nature of the saints,—you have far more to do than other men. You have a multitude of head-strong passions to subdue, and abundance of deadly sins to kill, and rooted vices to root up: you have a false opinion of God, and his ways, to be plucked up; and the customs of many years' standing to be broken: you have blind minds that must be enlightened with heavenly knowledge, and abundance of spiritual truths that are above the reach of flesh and blood, that you must needs learn and understand: you have much to know, that is hard to be known: you have a dead soul to be made alive, and a hard heart to be melted; and a seared conscience to be softened, and made tender; and the guilt of many thousand sins to be pardoned: you have a new heart to get, and a new end to aim at, and seek after, and a new life to live; abundance of enemies you have to fight with, and overcome; abundance of temptations to resist and conquer; many graces to get, and preserve and exercise, and increase; and abundance of holy work to do for the

service of God, and the good of yourselves and others. O what a deal of work doth every one of these words contain! And yet what abundance more might I name! And have you all this to do, and yet will you delay? And they are not indifferent matters that are before you: it is no less than the saving of your souls, and obtaining the blessed glory of the saints. Necessity is upon you. These are things that must be done, or else wo to you that ever you were born! And yet have you another day to lose? Why, sirs, if you had a hundred miles to go in a day or two, upon pain of death, would you delay? O think of the work that you have to do, and then judge whether it be not time to stir?

20. And methinks it should exceedingly terrify you to consider, What multitudes do perish by such delays; and how few that wilfully delay, are ever converted and saved! Many a soul, that once had purposes hereafter to repent, is now in the misery where there is no repentance that will do them any good. For my part, though I have known some very few converted when they were old; yet I must needs say, both that they were very few indeed, and I had reason to believe, that they were such as had sinned before in ignorance, and did not wilfully put off repentance, when they were convinced that they must turn. Though I doubt not but God may convert even these if he please, yet I cannot say that I have ever known many, if any such, to be converted. Sure I am that God's usual time is in childhood, or youth, before they have long abused grace, and wilfully delayed to turn when they were convinced.

Some considerable time, I confess, may have elapsed, before their first convictions and purposes be brought to any great ripeness of performance: but O how dangerous it is to delay!

21. Consider also, Either conversion is good or bad for you; either it is needful or unnecessary. If it be bad, and a needless thing, then let it alone altogether. But if you are convinced that it is good and necessary, is it not better now than to stay any longer? Is it not the sooner the better? Are you afraid of being safe or happy too soon? If you are sick, you care not how soon you are well; if you have a bone out, you care not how soon it is set; if you fall into the water, you care not how soon you get out; if your house be on fire, you care not how soon it be quenched; if you are put in fear by any doubts or ill tidings, you care not how soon your fears be over. And yet are you afraid of being too soon out of the power of the devil, and the danger of hell; and of being too soon the sons of God, and the holy, justified heirs of heaven?

22. Consider also, Either you can turn now, or not. If you can and yet will not, you are utterly without excuse. If you cannot to-day, how much less will you be able hereafter, when strength is less, and difficulties greater, and burdens more? Is it not time, therefore, to apply to Christ for strength; and should not the very sense of your inability dissuade you from delay?

23. Consider, How long you have stayed already, and put God's patience to it by your folly. Have not the devil, the world, and the flesh, had many years' time of your life already? Have you not

long enough been swallowing the poison of sin; and long enough been abusing the Lord that made you; and the blood of the Son of God that was shed for you; and the Spirit of Grace, that hath moved and persuaded you? Are you not yet gone far enough from God? And have you not yet done enough to the damning of yourselves, and casting away everlasting life? O wretched sinners! it is rather time for you to fall down on your faces before the Lord, and with tears and groans to lament it day and night, that ever you have gone so far in sin, and delayed so long to turn to him as you have done. Sure, if after so many years' rebellion, you are yet so far from lamenting it, that you had rather have more of it, and had rather hold on a little longer, no wonder if God forsake you, and let you alone.

24. Have you any hopes of God's acceptance and your salvation, or not? If you have such hopes,—that, when you turn, God will pardon all your sins, and give you everlastlng life,—is it, think you, an ingenuous thing to desire to offend him yet a little longer, from whom you expect such exceeding mercy and glory? Have you the faces to speak out what is in your hearts and practice; and to go to God with such words as these? 'Lord, I know I cannot have the pardon of one sin without the blood of Christ, and the riches of thy mercy. Nor can I be saved from hell without it: but yet I hope for all this from thy grace. I beseech thee let me live a little longer in my sins; a litt'e longer let me trample on the blood of Christ, and despise thy commandments, and abuse thy mercies; a little longer let me spit in the face of thy goodness, and prefer the flesh and

the world before thee, and then pardon me all that ever I did, and take me into glory.'—Could you for shame put such a request to God as this? If you could, you are past shame: if not, then do not practise and desire that which you cannot, for shame, speak out and request.

25. Moreover, It is an exceeding advantage to you to come to God betimes; and an exceeding loss, that you will suffer by delay, if you were sure to be converted at the last. If you speedily come in, you may have time to learn, and get more understanding in the matters of God, than otherwise can be expected. For knowledge will not be had but by time and study. You may also have time to get strength of grace, when young beginners can expect no more than infant strength. You may grow to be men of parts and abilities, to be useful in the church, and profitable to those about you, when others cannot go or stand, unless they lean on the stronger for support. If you come in betimes, you may do God a deal of service; which, in the evening of the day, you will neither have strength nor time to do. You may have time to get assurance of salvation, and to be ready with comfort, when death shall call; when a weakling is like to be perplexed with doubts and fears, and death is like to be terrible, because of their unreadiness.

26. And did you ever consider, who and how many do stay for you while you delay? Do you know who it is that you make to wait your leisure? God himself stands over you with the offers of his mercy, as if he thought it long till you return, saying, "O that there were such a heart in them!"

and "when will it once be!" "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof." And do you think it wise, or safe, or mannerly, for you to make the God of heaven to wait on you, while you are serving his enemy? Can you offer God a baser indignity, than to expect that he should support your lives, and feed you, and preserve you, and patiently forbear while you abuse him to his face, and drudge for the flesh, the world, and the devil? Should a worm thus use the Lord that made him? You will not yourselves hold a candle in your hands while it burns your own fingers; nor will you hold a nettle or a wasp in your hand to sting you; nor will you keep a dog in your house that is good for nothing but to snarl at you, and bite your children, or worry your sheep: and yet God hath long held up your lives, while, instead of light, you have yielded nothing but an offensive snuff; while, instead of grapes, you have brought nothing but thorns and thistles; and while you have snarled at his children and his flock, and done the worst you could against him. And would you indeed put God to wait on you thus, while you serve the devil yet one day more? Must God, as it were, hold the candle to the drunkard while he reels about? Must he draw the curtain, while the filthy creature does once more please his carnal affections? Marvel not, if he withdraw his supporting mercy, and let such wretches drop into hell!

And it is not God only, but his servants, and creatures, and ordinances, that are all waiting on you. The angels stay for the joy that is due to

them upon your conversion. Ministers are studying, and preaching, and praying for you; godly neighbours are praying, and longing for your change. The springs and rivers are flowing for you; the winds blow for you; the sun shines for you; the clouds rain for you; the earth bears fruit for you; the beasts must labour, and suffer, and die for you: all things are doing, and would you stand still, or else do worse? What haste makes the sun about the world, to return in its time to give you light! What haste make other creatures in your service! And yet must you delay? Must God stay, and Christ and the Spirit stay? Must angels stay, must ministers stay, must the godly stay, and the ordinances stay, and all the creatures stay your leisure, while you are abusing God, and your souls, and others, and while you delay, as if it were too soon to turn?

27. Consider, That when you were lost, the Son of God did not delay the work of your redemption. He presently undertook it, and turned by the stroke of condemning justice. In the fulness of time he came and performed what he undertook; he failed not one day of his appointed time. And will you now delay to accept the benefit and to turn to him? Must he make such haste to save you at so dear a rate, and now will you delay to be saved?

28. Moreover, God doth not delay to do you good. You have the day and night in their proper seasons; the sun doth not fail to rise upon you at the appointed time; you have the spring and harvest in their proper seasons; the former and the latter rain in season. When you are in want, you have

seasonable supplies; and when you are in danger, you have seasonable deliverances. And is it meet or equal that you should refuse to bring forth seasonable fruit, but still be putting off God with your delays?

29. Moreover, When you are in trouble and necessity, you are then in haste for deliverance and relief. Then you think every day a week, till your danger or suffering be past. If you be under the pain of a disease, or in danger of death, or under poverty, or oppression, or disgrace, you would have God relieve you without delay; and yet you will not turn to him without delay. Then you are ready to cry out, 'How long, Lord, how long till deliverance come?' But you will not hear God, when he crieth to you, in your sins—How long will it be ere you turn from your transgressions? When shall it once be? When you are to receive any outward deliverance, you care not how soon; the sooner the better: but when you are to turn to God, and receive his grace and title to glory, then you care not how late, as if you had no mind of it. Can you, for shame, beg of God to hasten your deliverance, when you remember your delays, and still continue to trifle with him and draw back?

30. Your present prosperity, and worldly delights, are passing away without delay; and should you delay to make sure of better in their stead? Time is going; and health is going; youth is going; yea, life is going; your riches are taking wing; your fleshly pleasures do perish in the very using; your meat and drink is sweet to you little longer than it is in your throat. Shortly you must part with house

and lands, with goods and friends; and all your mirth and earthly business will be done. All this you know, and yet will you delay to lay up a durable treasure, which you may trust upon, and to provide you a better tenement before you be turned out of this? What will you do for a habitation, for pleasures and contents, when all that you have now is spent and gone, and earth will afford you nothing but a grave? If you could but keep that you have, I should not much wonder, that knowing so little of God and another world, you look not much after it; but when you perceive death knocking at your doors, and seeing all your worldly comforts are packing up and hasting away, methinks, if you have your wit's sense about you, you should presently turn, and make sure of heaven, without any more delay.

31. Consider also, Whether it be equal that you should delay your conversion, when you can seasonably despatch your worldly business; and when your flesh would be provided for, you can hearken to it without delay. You have wit enough to sow your seed in season, and will not delay it till the time of harvest. You will reap your corn when it is ripe, and gather your fruit when it is ripe, without delay. You observe the seasons in the course of your labours, day by day, and year by year. You will not lie in bed, when you should be at your work, nor delay all night to go to your rest; nor suffer your servants to delay your business. You will know your dinner-time, and supper-time, day after day. If you be sick, you will seek help without delay, lest your disease should grow to be incurable. And

yet will you delay your conversion, and the making sure of heaven? Why, sirs, shall these trifles be done without delay, and shall your salvation be put off? In the name of God, what do you think of? Do you imagine that you can better suffer hell-fire, than hunger or nakedness? Or that you can better bear the loss of everlasting joys, than the loss of your commodities and provisions in the world? Sure, if you believe the life to come, you cannot think so. And can you have time for every thing, except that one thing which all the rest are merely to promote, and in comparison of which they are all but dreams? Can you have time to work, to plough, and sow, and reap, and cannot you have time to prepare for eternal life? Why, sirs, if you cannot find time yet to search your hearts, to turn to God, and prepare for death, give over eating and drinking, and sleeping, and say, you cannot have time for these. You may as wisely say so for these smaller matters, as for the greater.

32. Moreover, if men offer you conveniences and commodities for your bodies, you will not stand delaying, and need so many persuasions to accept them. If your landlord would for nothing renew your lease; if any man would give you houses or lands, would you delay so long before you would accept them? A beggar at your door will not only thankfully take your alms, without your entreaty and importunity, but will beg for it, and be importunate with you to give it. And yet will you delay to accept the blessed offers of grace, which are so much greater?

33. Yet consider, that it is God that is the giver,

and you that are the miserable beggars and receivers. And therefore it is fitter you should wait on God, and call on him for his grace, when he seemeth to delay, and not that he should wait on you. He can live without your receiving, but you cannot live without his giving. The beggar must be glad of an alms at any time; and the condemned person of a pardon at any time; but the giver may well expect that his gifts be received without delay, or else he may let them go without.

34. And methinks you should not deal worse with God, when he comes to you as a physician to save your own souls, than you would do with a neighbour, or a friend, when it is not for your own good, but for theirs. If your neighbour lay a dying, you would go and visit him without delay. If he fell down in a swoon, you would catch him up without delay. If he fell into the fire or water, you would pluck him out without delay. Yea, you would do thus much to a very beast. And yet will you delay, when it is not another, but yourselves that are sinking and drowning, and within a step of death and desperation? If a woman be but in travail, her neighbours will come to her without delay; and yet when their own souls are in bondage to sin and Satan, and a state of death, they will let them lie there, year after year, and when we desire them to be converted, here is nothing but delays.

35. If yet you perceive not how unreasonably you deal with God and your souls, I beseech you, consider, whether you do not deal worse with him than you do with the devil himself. If Satan or his servants persuade you to sin, you delay not so long

but you are presently at it. You are ready to follow every tippling companion or gamester that puts up the finger. You are as willing to go, as they are to invite you. The very sight of the cup does presently prevail with the drunkard; and the sight of a harlot prevaileth with the fornicator; and sin can be presently entertained without delay. But when God comes, when Christ calleth, when the Spirit moveth, when the minister persuadeth, when conscience is convinced, we can have nothing, after all, but wishes, and purposes, and promises, with delays.

Nay, more than this: so eager are they on their sin, that we are not able to entreat them to delay it. When the passionate man is but provoked, we cannot persuade him to delay his railing language, so long as to consider first of the issue. We cannot entreat the drunkard to put off his drunkenness but for one twelvemonth, while he trieth another course. All the ministers in the country cannot persuade the worldling to forbear his worldliness, and the proud persons their pride, and the ungodly person his ungodliness, for the space of one month, or week, or day. And yet when God hath a command and a request to them, to turn to him and be saved, here they can delay, without our entreaty.

36. Consider also, that it is not possible for you to turn too soon: nor will you ever have cause to repent of your speediness. Delay may undo you; but speedy turning can do you no harm. I wonder what hurt you think it can do you, to be quickly reconciled to God! And why, then, should there

be any delay, where it is not possible to be too hasty? Do you think that there is ever a saint in heaven, yea or on earth, that is sorry he continued not longer unconverted? No: you shall never hear of such a repentance from the mouth of any that is indeed converted.

37. But I must tell you on the contrary, that if ever you be so happy as to be converted, you will repent it, and a hundred times repent it, that you delayed so long before you yielded. O, how it will grieve you, when your hearts are melted with the love of God, and are overcome with the infinite kindness of his pardoning, saving grace, that ever you had the hearts to abuse such a God, and deal so unkindly with him, and stand out so long against that compassion that was seeking your salvation! O, how it will grieve your hearts, to consider that you have spent so much of your lives in sin, for the devil, and the flesh, and the deceitful world! O, you will think with yourselves, 'Was not God more worthy of my youthful days? Had I not better have spent them in his service, and in the work of my salvation? Alas, that I should waste such precious days, and now be so far behind-hand as I am! Now I want that faith, that hope, that love, that peace, that assurance, that joy in the Holy Ghost, which I might have had, if I had spent those years for God, which I spent in the service of the world and the flesh.'

38. And I pray you, consider whether it belongs of right to God or you, to determine of the day and hour of your coming in. It is he that must give you the pardon of your sins; and doth it not belong

to him to appoint the time of your receiving it? You cannot have Christ and life without him: it is he that must give you the kingdom of heaven: and is he not worthy, then, to appoint the time of your conversion, that you may be made partakers of it? But if he say, To-day, dare you say, I will stay till to-morrow?

39. Nay, consider, whether God or you be likelier to know the meetest time. Dare you say that you know better when to turn than God doth? I suppose you dare not; and if you dare not say so, for shame, let not your practice say so. God saith, "To-day, while it is called to-day, hear my voice, and harden not your hearts." And dare you say, It is better to stay one month longer, or one day longer? God saith, "Behold, this is the accepted time! Behold, this is the day of salvation!" And will you say, It is time enough to-morrow? Do you know better than God? If your physician do but tell you in a pleurisy or a fever, You must let blood this day before to-morrow; you have so much reason as to submit to his understanding, and think that he knows better than you: and cannot you allow as much to the God of wisdom?

40. Consider also, that the speediness of your conversion, when God first calls you, doth make you the more welcome, and is a thing exceedingly pleasing to God. Our proverb is, a speedy gift is a double gift. If you ask any thing of a friend, and he give it you presently and cheerfully at the first asking, you will think you have it with a good-will; but if he stand long delaying first, and de-

murring upon it, you will think that you have it with an ill-will, and that you owe him the smaller thanks. If a very beggar at your door must stay long for an alms, he will think he is the less beholden to you. How much more may God be displeased, when he must stay so long for his own, and that for your benefit! God loveth a cheerful giver, and consequently, a cheerful obeyer of his call; and if it be hearty and cheerful, it is the likelier to be speedy, without such delays.

41. And I would desire you but to do with God as you would be done by. Would you take it well of your children, if they should tear all their clothes, and cast their meat to the dogs, and tread it in the dirt, and when you entreat them, they will not regard you? Would you stand month after month entreating and waiting on them, as God doth on you in a foolisher course? Or rather, would you not either fondly whip them, or take their meat from them, till hunger teach them to use it better? If your servant will spend the whole day and year in drinking and playing, when he should do your work, will you wait on him all the year with entreaties, and pay him at last, as if he had served you? And can you expect that God should deal so with you?

42. And consider, I entreat you, that your delay is a denial, and so may God interpret it, for the time of your turning is part of the command. He that saith, Turn, saith, Now, even to-day, without delay. He giveth you no longer day. If time be lengthened, and the offer made again and again, that is more than he promised you, or you could

have promised yourselves. His command is, Now return and live. And if you refuse the time, the present time, you refuse the offer, and forfeit the benefit. And if you knew but what it is to give God a denial in such a case as this, and what a case you were in, if he should turn away in wrath, and never come near you more; you would then be afraid of jesting with his hot displeasure, or trifling with the Lord.

43. And, methinks, you should remember, that God does not stay thus on all, as he doth on you. Thousands are under burning and despair, and past all remedy, while patience is waiting yet upon you. Can you forget that others are in hell at this very hour, for as small sins as those that you are yet entangled and linger in? Good Lord, what a thing is a senseless heart! That at the same time when millions are in misery, for delaying or refusing to be converted, their successors should fearlessly venture in their steps! Surely, if faith had but opened your ears to hear the cries of those damned souls, you durst not imitate them by your delays.

44. And I must tell you, that God will not always thus wait on you, and attend you by his patience, as hitherto he hath done. Patience hath his appointed time. And if you out-stay that time, you are miserable wretches. I can assure you, sirs, the glass is turned upon you, and when it is run out, you shall never have an hour of patience more. Then God will no more entreat you to be converted. He will not always stand over you with salvation, and say, O that this sinner would repent and live! O that he would take the

mercies that I have provided for him! Do not expect that God should do this always with you; for it will not be.

45. Your delays do weary the servants of Christ that are employed for your recovery. Ministers will grow weary of preaching to you, and persuading you. When we come to men that were never warned before, we come in hopes that they will hear and obey; and this hope puts life and earnestness into our persuasions: but when we have persuaded men but a few times in vain, and leave them as we found them, our spirits begin to droop and flag; much more, when we have preached and persuaded you many years, and still you are the same, and are but where you were,—this dulls a minister's spirit, and makes him preach heavily and coldly, when he is almost out of heart and hope.

Truly, sirs, I must tell you, for my own part, that if it had not been for those that gave me better encouragement by their obedience, I should never have held out with you a quarter of this time. If all had profited as little as some, and all stuck as fast in an unconverted state as some; if the humble, penitent, obedient ones among you, had not been my comfort and encouragement under Christ, I had been gone from you many years ago; I could never have held out till now: either my corruption would have made me run away with Jonah, or my judgment would have commanded me to shake off the dust off my feet as a witness against you, and depart.

But to what end do I speak all this to you?

To what end? Why, to let you see how you abuse both God and man, by your delays and disobedience. You cannot possibly do us, that are your teachers, a greater injury or mischief in the world. It is not in your power to wrong us more. Are our studies and our labours worth nothing, think you? Are our watchings and waiting worth nothing? Are our prayers, and tears, and groans to be despised? God will not despise them, if you do; believe it, he will set them all on your account, and you will one day have a heavy reckoning of them, and pay full dear for them. Is it equal dealing with us, that when we are watching for your souls, as men that know we must give an account, you should rob us of our comfort, and make us do it with sighs and sorrow? Yea, that you should undo all that we are doing, and make us lose our labour and our hopes? And yet do you not think to pay for this? I tell you again, unconverted sinners, we are wearied with your delays. Many years we have been persuading you but to turn and live, and yet you are unturned; you have been convinced long, and thinking on it; and wishing long, and talking of it; and promising long, and yet it is undone, and here is nothing but delays. We see, while you delay, death takes away one this week, and another the next week, and you are passing into the other world apace; and yet those that are left behind will take no warning, but still delay: we see that Satan delays not while you delay: he is day and night at work against you: if he seem to make a truce with you, it is that he may be doing secretly, while you suspect him not: we see that sin delayeth not while you delay; it is working like poison or infection in

your bodies, and seizing upon your vital powers; it is every day blinding you more and more, it is hardening your hearts more and more, and searing your consciences, to bring you past all feeling and hope. And must we stand by and see this miserable work with our people's souls, and all be frustrated and rejected by themselves that we do for their deliverance? I pray you deal but fairly with us, and tell us whether ever you will turn or not. If you will not, but are resolved for sin and hell, say so, that we may know the worst; speak out your minds, that we may know what to trust to; for if we once knew you would not turn, we would soon have done with you, and leave you to the justice of God. But if still you say, you will turn—when will you do it? You will do it, and you hope you shall: but when? How long would you have us wait yet? Have you not abused us enough? Nay, I must tell you, that you even weary God himself. It is his own expression, Mal. ii. 17. Isa. xliii. 24.) "Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." (Isa. i. 14.) And I must say to you as the Prophet (Isaiah vii. 13.) "Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but you will weary my God also?" Consider what it is that you do.

46. Consider also, that you are at a constant and unspeakable loss every day and hour that you delay your conversion. O! little do you know what you deprive yourselves of every day. If a slave in the gallies or prison might live at court, as a favourite of the prince, in honour, and delight, and ease, would he delay either years or hours? Or would he not rather think within himself, Is it not better to be at ease and in honour, than to be here? As the

prodigal said, " How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" All this while I might be in plenty and delight.—All the while that you live in sin, you might be in favour of God, in the high and heavenly employments of the saints; you might have the comforts of daily communion with Christ and with the saints; you might be laying up for another world, and might look death in the face with faith and confidence, as one that cannot be conquered by it; you might live as the heirs of heaven on earth. All this, and more than this, you lose by your delays; all the mercies of God are lost upon you; your food and raiment, your health and wealth, which you set so much by, all is lost, and worse than lost, for they turn to your greater hurt; all our pains with you, and all the ordinances of God which you possess, and all your time is lost and worse. And do you think it, indeed, a wise man's part to live any longer at such a loss as this, and that wilfully and for nothing? If you knew your loss, you would not think so.

47. Nay more, you are all this while doing that which must be undone again, or you will be undone for ever. You are running from God, but you must come back again, or perish when all is done. You are learning a hundred carnal lessons and false conceits, that must be all unlearned again; you are shutting up your eyes in wilful ignorance, which must be opened again: you must learn the doctrine of Christ, the great Teacher of the Church, if you stay never so long, or else you would be cut off from his people. Acts iii. 22. and vii. 37.

When you have been long accustoming yourselves

to sin, you must unlearn and break all these customs again. You are hardening your hearts daily, and they must again be softened. And I must tell you, that though a little time and labour may serve to do mischief, yet it is not quickly undone again. You may sooner set your house on fire than quench it. You may sooner cut and wound your bodies, than heal them again; and sooner catch a cold or a disease than cure it; you may quickly do that which must be longer undoing. Besides, the cure is accompanied with pain; you must take many a bitter draught, in groans or tears of godly sorrow, for these delays; the wounds, that you are now giving your souls, must smart, and smart again, before they are searched and healed to the bottom. And what man of wisdom would make himself such work and sorrow? Who would travel on an hour longer, that knows he is out of his way, and must come back again? Would you not think him a madman that would say, I will go on a little further, and then I will turn back.

48. And methinks if it were but this, it would terrify you from your delays, that it is likely to make your conversion more grievous, if you should have so great mercy from God, after all, to be converted. There are very few escape, that are so exceeding long in travail; but if you come to the birth, it is like to be with a double pain. For God must send either some grievous affliction to fire and frighten you out of your sins, or else some terrible horrors of conscience, that should make you groan, and groan again, in the feeling of your folly. The pangs and throes of conscience, in the work of conversion, are far more grievous in some than in others. Some

are even on the rack, and almost brought besides their wits, and the next step to desperation, with horror of soul and the sense of the wrath of God; so that they lie in doubts and complaints many a year together, and think that they are even forsaken of God. And to delay your conversion is the way to draw on either this or worse.

49. Consider also, that delays are contrary to the very nature of the work, and the nature of your souls themselves. If indeed you ever mean to turn, it is a work of haste, and violence, and diligence, that you must needs set upon. You must "strive to enter in, for the gate is strait, the way is narrow that leads to life, and few there be that find it." "Many shall seek to enter, and shall not be able." "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, he shall answer, I know you not whence you are, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." It is a race that you are to run, and heaven is the prize. "And you know that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize; and therefore you must so run, as that you may win and obtain."

And what is more contrary to this than delay? You are soldiers in fight, and your salvation lieth in the victory; and will you trifle in such a case, when death or life is even at hand? You are travellers to another world, and will you stay till the day is almost past, before you will begin your journey? Christianity is a work of that infinite consequence, and requireth such speedy and vigorous despatch,

that delay is more unreasonable in this than in any thing in all the world.

50. If all this will not serve to make you turn, let me tell you, that while you are delaying, your judgment doth not delay; and that when it comes, these delays will multiply your misery, and the remembrance of them will be your everlasting torment. Whatever you are thinking of, or whatever you are doing, your dreadful doom is drawing on apace, and misery will overtake you, before you are aware. When you are in the alehouse, little thinking of damnation, even then is your damnation coming in haste; when you are drowned in the pleasures or cares of the world, your judgment is still hastening. You may delay, but it will not delay. It is the saying of the Holy Ghost, "Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." You may slumber, and that so carelessly, that we cannot awake you, but your damnation slumbereth not, nor hath done of a long time, while you thought it slumbered; and when it comes, it will awaken you. As a man that is in a coach on the road, or in a boat on the water, whatever he is speaking, or thinking, or doing, he is still going on, and hastening to his journey's end, or going down the stream; so whatever you think, or speak, or do, whether you believe it, or mock at it, whether you sleep or wake, whether you remember it or forget it, you are hastening to damnation, and you are every day a day nearer to it than before; and it is but a little while till you shall feel it. "Behold the Judge standeth before the door." The Holy Ghost hath told you, "the Lord is at hand." "The day is at hand; the time is at hand; the end of all things is

at hand." Rom. xiii. 12. Rev. xxii. 10. 1 Pet. iv. 7. "Behold, saith the Lord, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." And do you, as it were, see the Judge approaching, and damnation hastening on, and yet will you delay?

And withal consider, that when it comes, it will be most sore to such as you; and then what thoughts do you think you shall have of these delays? You are unable to conceive how it will torment your consciences, when you see that all your hopes are gone, to think to what you have brought yourselves by your trifling. To feel yourselves in remediless misery, and remember how long the remedy was offered you, and you delayed to use it till it was too late. To see that you are for ever shut out of heaven, and remember that you might have had it as well as others, but you lost it by delay. O then it will come with horror into your mind, How often was I persuaded, and told of this? How often had I inward motions to return? How often did I purpose to be holy, and to give up my heart and life to God? I was even ready to have yielded, but I still delayed, and now it is too late. Then you shall pay for all our warnings, and all the sermons and motions which you lost.

And now, having laid you down no less than fifty moving considerations, if it be possible to save you from these delays, I conclude with this request to you, whoever you be that read these lines, that you would but consider of all these reasons, and then entertain them as they deserve. There is not one of them that you are able to gainsay, much less all of them. If after the reading of all these, you can yet

believe that you have reasons to delay, your understandings are forsaken of God; but if you are forced to confess that you should not delay, what will you do then? Will you obey God and your own consciences, or will you not? Will you turn this hour without delay? Take heed of denying it, lest you have never such a motion more. You know not but God, who calls you to it, may be resolved that it should be now or never. I do beseech you, yea, as his messenger, I charge you in his name, that you delay not an hour longer, but presently be resolved, and make an unchangeable covenant with God; and, as ever you would have favour in that day of your distress, delay not now to accept his favour in the day of your visitation.

O what a blessed family were that, who upon the reading of this, would presently say, We have done exceeding foolishly in delaying so great a matter so long; let us agree together to give up ourselves to God without any more delay. This shall be the day; we will stay no longer. The flesh, and the world, and the devil, have had too much already. It is a wonder of patience that hath borne with us so long; we will abuse the patience of God no longer, but begin to be absolutely his this day. If this may be the effect of these exhortations, you shall have the everlasting blessing; but if still you delay, I hope I am free from the guilt of your blood.

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